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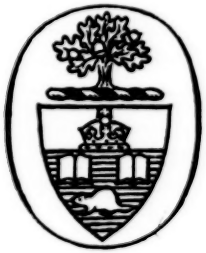

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

WILLIAM BLISSETT is Associate Professor of English in the University of Saskatchewan.

E. J. CHIASSON is a member of the Department of English in St. Louis University.

DAVID W. EVANS is Assistant Registrar in the University of Southern California.

EMIL L. FACKENHEIM, Assistant Professor of Philosophy in the University, is engaged in research on the philosophy of religion from Kant to Schelling.

THOMAS G. HENDERSON is Associate Professor of Philosophy in McGill University.

S. JOHN is a member of the Department of Modern Languages in the London School of Economics.

L. E. M. LYNCH is Associate Professor of Philosophy in St. Michael's College.

WINIFRED LYNSKEY is on the staff of Purdue University in the Department of English.

HEINRICH MEYER is Professor of German in Muhlenberg College, Pa.

D. R. G. OWEN, author of *Scientism, Man and Religion* (1952), is Associate Professor of Ethics in Trinity College.

GORDON ROPER is Associate Professor of English in Trinity College.

W. M. SIBLEY is Professor of Philosophy and Chairman of the Department in the University of Manitoba.

C. P. STACEY is Director of the Historical Section, Army Headquarters, Ottawa.

F. V. WINNETT is Professor of Oriental Languages and Head of the Department in University College.

LEONARD WOODBURY is Assistant Professor of Greek in University College.

KANT AND RADICAL EVIL

EMIL L. FACKENHEIM

In commemoration of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Kant's death, February 12th, 1804

IN the year 1792 Kant administered a shock to some of his admirers. He published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* an essay which bore the ominous title *On the Radical Evil in Human Nature*. The shock was repeated in the following year, when this essay was republished, as the first and in many years the crucial part, of Kant's long-awaited work in the philosophy of religion, *Religion within the Bounds of Reason Alone*.

Kant's *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* had appeared in 1785, and his *Critique of Practical Reason* in 1788. These two works had quickly fired the enthusiasm of the moral and religious humanists of the age. They wholeheartedly agreed with the central teaching of these works concerning man's moral freedom. Kant justified their faith that man was free to raise himself above nature to spiritual self-realization, and that in order to do so he required the help of neither nature below nor God above. The religion of these men was a humanistic religion, whose essential faith was in man's inherent goodness. If they thought of evil at all, they understood it as mere inertia, to be progressively removed by man himself. They rejected a religion which regarded evil in man as somehow essential. Thus if they were Christians, they were Christians of a very unorthodox sort. For they repudiated original sin, and the incarnation required to wipe it out.

Among the admirers of Kant were the great German poets. Schiller regarded the Kantian "determine thyself" as one of the greatest words ever spoken by man. Goethe, though less favourably inclined toward Kant, was nevertheless able to write under his influence the telling sentence: "God is the objectivation of the feeling of human dignity."[1] The great German poets regarded Kant as an ally in their battle for the dignity of man.

And now Kant suddenly spoke of radical evil! Moreover, he treated it as if it were an essential part of religion! He seemed to have turned traitor to his own gospel of man's moral freedom, and to have gone

[1]Quoted by K. Vorlaender, *Kant–Schiller–Goethe* (2nd ed., Leipzig, 1923), 151.

over to the enemy, to the detractors of man. True, Kant had spoken of evil before. But he had not spoken of radical evil. Evil had been merely the "incomplete development of the capacity for good."[2] It was an imperfection which man himself could conquer. Indeed, he was actually in the process of conquering it.[3] Now Kant spoke of an evil somehow inherent in human nature itself. Little wonder that Schiller regarded the essay as "scandalous."[4] And little wonder that Goethe went so far as to cast aspersions on Kant's motives in writing it. Only some ulterior motive, he thought, could account for his defection. In a well-known letter to Herder he wrote: "Kant required a long lifetime to purify his philosophical mantle of many impurities and prejudices. And now he has wantonly tainted it with the shameful stain of radical evil, in order that Christians too might be attracted to kiss its hem."[5]

Were these criticisms justified? This paper will seek to show that they were not. The essay on radical evil certainly represents a shift in doctrine. But this shift is not due to political considerations of any kind, to a desire to appease intolerant theologians or the Prussian censor.[6] Nor is it due to the encroachment of theological upon philosophical principles.[7] Kant's religion is a philosophical religion independent of all revelation; and his "radical evil" cannot be identified with original sin. Kant's shift to radical evil is made for a strictly philosophical reason; and this reason is, strangely enough, the need to give a full and adequate justification of moral freedom. Kant becomes gradually convinced that moral freedom can have no other meaning than the freedom to choose between good and evil. And he

[2]*Vorlesungen ueber die philosophische Religionslehre* (2nd ed., Leipzig, 1830), 150.

[3]*Kant's Gesammelte Schriften*, Prussian Academy ed. (Berlin, 1902–38), VIII, 123. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations refer to this edition.

[4]In a letter to G. Koerner, dated February 28, 1793, in *Schillers Briefe*, ed. F. Jonas (Stuttgart, n.d.), III, 288.

[5]In a letter to Herder, dated June 7, 1793, *Werke*, Grossherzogin Sophie von Sachsen ed. (Weimar, 1887), section IV, vol. X, 75.

[6]Cf. especially Kant's *Streit der Fakultaeten*, in particular the preface, *Schriften*, VII, 5 ff. Cf. also K. Vorlaender's edition of *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der reinen Vernunft* (Leipzig, 1919), xxx ff.

[7]The title of Kant's work alone is sufficient proof that he strove to make a sharp distinction between "natural" or "philosophical" religion, on the one hand, and "revealed" religion, on the other. There can be no doubt that Kant was sincere in making this distinction, though it is quite another question (and one well worth asking), whether he managed to preserve it. Nevertheless, one group of critics accused him of seeking to undermine revealed theology, whereas the other group accused him of giving a mere theological apologetic in a pseudo-philosophical form. As far as Kant's intentions are concerned, both accusations are equally unjust. And as regards performance, there may be some justice in the former criticism, but (as this paper seeks to show) there is none whatever in the latter.

finds it necessary to introduce the doctrine of radical evil so as to make freedom, in this sense, intelligible.

II

In order to understand Kant's doctrine of radical evil, it is necessary to understand the problems which lead to its introduction. We must therefore begin with a summary of his ethical teaching, as stated in the *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* and the *Critique of Practical Reason.*

Man, according to Kant, belongs at once to two worlds. One is the world of sense, the other the intelligible world. As a member of the former, he is subject to natural inclinations; as a member of the latter, he is subject to a universal moral law. His membership in the two worlds is revealed to man in his moral experience. He alone of all beings has a concept of a moral imperative or duty. None but he can distinguish between "I want" and "I ought."

An animal, wholly determined by its natural inclinations, knows of no such distinction. It may find itself torn between want and want, but never between want and duty. If it could speak, it might use the expression "I ought"; but it would always mean by it "I ought because I want"; the ought would be relative to a want, and thus part of it. But where desire conflicts only with desire, and never with duty or moral law, there can be no good or evil. The animal, which belongs to the world of sense only, is innocent. A man may be good or evil: but he is never innocent.

An animal, then, has no sense of moral duty; but neither has a god. A being wholly belonging to the intelligible world would indeed know the moral law; but it would have no desires which could possibly conflict with that law. Such a being would act in conformity with the moral law, but it would do so as a necessity flowing from its very nature. It would act out of the sheer love of goodness, and could not act otherwise. But the moral law is experienced as duty only where there is a desire which may conflict with it. The "I ought" is significant only where it can differ from the "I want." A being in which this distinction is absent is not good but holy. But while man may do what he ought to do, he never does it merely as a matter of course. A man may be morally good; but he can never be holy.

In order to act morally I must not merely do my duty, I must also do it for duty's sake. The fact that it is my duty must be sufficient reason for my doing it. An action springing from any other motive may be lawful; but since the motive is ulterior, it is, properly speaking, not moral. Thus I may abstain from crime solely because of my

fear of punishment; or I may support my aged father solely because I love him. But it would clearly be my duty to abstain from crime even if, contrary to Hollywood legend, it *should* pay; and I should be obligated to support my father even if the Oedipus complex had wrought havoc among my emotions.

It may seem that these two examples differ substantially; for love of one's father is a noble emotion, whereas the fear of punishment is not. But what they have in common is that they are both inclinations which, as such, are not subject to my will. Hence I cannot be obligated to have one inclination rather than another.[8] Only that action is moral which is motivated by reverence for the moral law itself. The inclinations may indeed support what the moral law commands, and it is very pleasant if they do; but they can never constitute the morality of an action.

A good man, therefore, is a man who makes the moral law the sufficient motive of all his morally relevant actions. His principle in life, or, in Kantian language, his maxim, is the moral law itself. This is the celebrated categorical imperative: "Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a universal law of nature."[9]

Morality, then, lies essentially in the will. The human will may be determined by respect for the moral law, or it may be determined, in part or completely, by the inclinations. Kant calls the former a good or autonomous will; the latter he calls a heteronomous will, a will which yields, in varying degrees, to the commands of inclination.

This account of moral obligation raises the problem of moral freedom. It presupposes that man, while subject to the inclinations of his empirical nature, is yet free to obey the moral law apprehended by his reason. Is there such a freedom? Clearly, all moral obligation disappears if there is not. Kant never wavers in the slightest degree on this fundamental point: only that can be a moral duty which I am free to fulfil; only that can be a moral crime which I am free to avoid. No action is morally relevant which is not the result of a free decision. Hence if moral freedom is an illusion, there is neither good nor evil, but only moral indifference. And all supposed acting from duty alone is a mere self-deception.

[8]Kant grants that there is a sense in which love is a duty; but he denies that love, in that sense, is an inclination. Cf. *Schriften*, VI, 449: "Die Liebe wird hier aber nicht als Gefuehl (aesthetisch), d.i. als Lust an der Vollkommenheit anderer Menschen, nicht als Liebe des Wohlgefallens, verstanden (denn Gefuehle zu haben, dazu kann es keine Verpflichtung durch Andere geben), sondern muss als Maxime des Wohlwollens (als praktisch) gedacht werden, welche das Wohltun zur Folge hat."

[9]*Schriften*, IV, 421; *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Ethics*, tr. Abbott (10th ed., London, 1926), 46. For an incisive study of the various formulations of the categorical imperative, cf. H. J. Paton, *The Categorical Imperative* (Chicago, 1948), 129 ff.

Is freedom a reality? Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* defends the possibility of freedom; whereas the *Critique of Practical Reason* defends its actuality. According to the former of these works, human knowledge understands, not things as they are in themselves, but merely things as they appear to us, or phenomena. Metaphysics, or the knowledge of things in themselves, is impossible. This means that freedom cannot be proven; for freedom, if it exists, is a property, not of man as a phenomenon, but of man as a member of the intelligible world. But it also means that freedom cannot be refuted. Such a refutation would have to show that moral freedom and causal necessity are incompatible. But the causal necessity which we know applies only to phenomena, and hence only to man in so far as he is an empirical being. Causality does not apply to things in themselves. Therefore, while we cannot prove that there is moral freedom, we can at least prove its possibility. It is possible that man, as a phenomenon, should be wholly governed by causal necessity, yet, as a member of the intelligible world, should nevertheless be free.

How then do we know that freedom is an actuality? We have this knowledge, argues the *Critique of Practical Reason*, not in the form of theoretical proof, but in the form of moral faith. We all are conscious of the moral law; we cannot escape the sense of obligation it imposes on us. Yet there can be no moral obligation without moral freedom. We know ourselves as free, because we know ourselves as morally obligated. The categorical imperative speaks to our consciences the words: "Thou oughtst, hence thou canst."

III

The foregoing may suffice as an account, of necessity brief and even superficial, of the essentials of Kant's moral doctrine. We must now consider more closely an important ambiguity in this doctrine. Kant wavers between two views of moral freedom. According to the one, man is free in the degree to which he is determined by the moral principle; according to the other, he is free to choose good or evil. The former view predominates in the writings so far considered; Kant adopts it as the only view which is philosophically intelligible. But in the essay on radical evil he emphatically embraces the latter view; and his reason is that it alone is morally defensible. He embraces it at the risk of leaving it philosophically unintelligible.

We begin, then, with the earlier account of freedom. By a free will Kant does not mean an undetermined will. Such a will would be unintelligible; and it certainly would not be a moral will. A moral will is not an undetermined will, but a will determined by the moral principle. The difference between a free and an unfree will lies not in that

the latter is determined while the former is not. Rather, the unfree will is determined by an object, while the free will is determined by itself. The unfree or heteronomous will follows whatever inclination commands. The free or autonomous will liberates itself from the domination of inclination, and determines itself toward obedience to the moral law.

Now this clearly means that the will can determine itself in one way only: toward obedience to the moral law. Any other determination is not self-determination, but determination by the object of inclination. Hence a free will can only be a good will. Indeed, a free will and a good will are one and the same thing. Kant recognizes this implication with the utmost clarity. He defines the will as "a faculty of determining oneself to action in accordance with the conception of certain laws."[10] He derives from this definition the conclusion that "the mainspring of the human will . . . cannot be anything other than the moral law."[11] Hence "a free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same thing."[12] As forthright perhaps as any is this passage: "the pure will is good in all men; there can be no such thing as a will contrary to the [moral] law."[13]

This conclusion may well puzzle a superficial reader. For it may seem to obliterate the distinction between the good and the holy will, which Kant had so carefully drawn. A holy being, Kant had said, is in necessary conformity with the moral law; but a human being is not. The fact that the latter ought to do his duty does not mean that he necessarily does it. Indeed, the very concept of "ought" implies that he is free to do otherwise. Does not Kant's identification of the free with the good will deny man's freedom to ignore duty? And in so doing, does it not obliterate the distinction between a good and a holy will?

The solution of the puzzle is this: man differs from God, not in that he may will anything other than the moral law, but in that he may not will at all. Or rather: God is morally free absolutely, whereas man always possesses only a degree of such freedom. A pure will would indeed be necessarily good in all men; but will in man is never pure. This amounts to saying that we must distinguish, not between a good and an evil, but between a pure and an impure will. Or, if we prefer, between a will which is strong and a will which is weak. To the degree to which man wills, he wills the good; and to the degree to

[10]*Schriften*, IV, 427; Abbott, *Fundamental Principles*, 54.
[11]*Schriften*, V, 72; *Kant's Critique of Practical Reason*, tr. Abbott (6th ed., London, 1923), 164.
[12]*Schriften*, IV, 447; *Fundamental Principles*, p. 79.
[13]Reicke, *Lose Blaetter aus Kants Nachlass* (c. 1889), II, 139.

which he is driven toward anything but the good, he does not will at all. He is the will-less victim of his inclinations.

Kant illustrates this conclusion in a striking passage. "There is no one, not even the most consummate villain . . . who, when we set before him examples of . . . steadfastness in following good maxims . . . does not wish that he might also possess these qualities. Only on account of his inclinations and impulses he cannot attain this in himself, but at the same time he wishes to be free from such inclinations which are burdensome to himself. . . . He is [thus] conscious of a good will, which by his own confession constitutes the law for the bad will that he possesses as a member of the world of sense. . . ."[14] The villain here portrayed is not evil-willed but weak-willed. In so far as he wills at all, he wills the good; and in so far as he follows evil, he acts as determined, not by himself, but by an all-too-powerful inclination.

Now this account of moral freedom is open to so grave an objection that Kant, in the essay on radical evil, abandons it. For the account is compelled to deny that there can be such a thing as an evil will. Along with the evil will, it must deny evil itself. And in denying both, it cannot justify moral responsibility for moral evil.

The inclinations, as such, are neither good nor evil. The animal which is wholly governed by them is not immoral but amoral. This must clearly mean that in man, too, the inclinations are innocent. Good and evil are terms which refer, not to them, but only to free acts of will. "Moral good or moral evil refer to the actions, not the emotions of a person . . .; they are terms properly applied only . . . to maxims of the will."[15] But, according to Kant, there can be no will which is free and yet evil. What we might loosely call an evil will is merely a heteronomous or weak will. And a weak will is really only imperfectly good; it is not evil. To the extent to which it is will, it is good; and to the extent to which it is not good, it is not will at all. But where will is absent there is only inclination. And inclination is not immoral but amoral, not guilty but innocent. The weakling who yields to it is, *qua* yielding, not willing; and hence he is not responsible.

Let us once more consider Kant's unfortunate villain. "Unfortunate" is the exact attribute we should apply to him. Everybody calls him a villain, treating him as if he had willed evil, whereas in fact he has done nothing of the kind. In so far as he wills freely he wills good. His moral failure is due, not to an act of will but to lack of will. And this lack of will cannot, again, be an act of will, a will,

[14] *Schriften*, IV, 454 ff.; *Fundamental Principles*, 89 ff.
[15] *Schriften*, V, 60; *Critique of Practical Reason*, 151.

as it were, not to will. For, according to Kant, whatever is not will toward good, is not free will at all. This means that his moral failure is due to the domination of inclination, pure and simple, and will does not enter into it. It follows, therefore, that the villain is not a villain at all, but an innocent weakling. And he deserves, not our censure, but our pity.

To sum up we may say that Kant has tried to understand moral freedom by viewing man as subject to two laws: the laws of nature governing his inclinations, and the moral law governing his will. In this account, free will threatens to disappear into two necessities: a pure will which, *qua* will, is necessarily good; and the inclinations which are subject to a necessary law of nature, and hence morally indifferent. The possibility of evil has disappeared between divine holiness and animal innocence.

Kant comes to reject this view. Man, to be genuinely free and responsible, must have the choice, not between willing the good or not willing at all, but between good and evil. It must be possible for him to choose freely, i.e., responsibly, and yet choose *against* the moral law. The sole task of the essay on radical evil is to justify this possibility.

IV

"That 'the world lieth in evil' is a plaint as old as history, old even as the older art, poetry; indeed, as old as that oldest of all fictions, the religion of priest-craft."[16] These dramatic words open the essay on radical evil. Kant begins by quoting age-old wisdom in support of the fact that evil exists. The philosopher must explain it; he cannot explain it away.

Attempts to explain evil away do, of course, abound. Thus evil is often regarded as a kind of abnormal condition requiring no explanation in its own right, and disappearing along with the abnormal circumstances which have produced it. Proceeding in this vein, some blame evil on civilization, others on the lack of it. Kant makes short shrift of all such explanations, without bothering to give a formal refutation. The facts speak too loudly against them. Is civilization the villain in the piece, and is man by nature "noble"? The savage is anything but noble. He is given, not to mere animal fighting and killing, but to wanton cruelty and murder—to a cruelty which appears to be for cruelty's sake. If there is an innocent state of nature, then man is never in that state. Is then perhaps untamed nature to

[16] *Schriften*, VI, 19; *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, tr. T. M. Greene and H. H. Hudson (Chicago, 1934), 15. For the most part, we quote from that translation (referred to as *Religion*).

blame? Is there a latent goodness in man which, given civilization, will come to the fore? Here "we must listen to a long melancholy litany of indictments against humanity: of secret falsity even in the closest friendship, . . . of a propensity to hate him to whom we are indebted . . . and of many other vices still concealed under the appearance of virtue, to say nothing of the vices of those who do not conceal them." And, Kant concludes, if these facts are not sufficient to convince us, we need but look at the relations among nations: a state of perpetual war, hot or cold; a state sufficient to ridicule man's hope for a naturally evolving millennium as a "wild fantasy."[17]

Kant takes this impressive factual evidence as sufficient proof that evil is no mere abnormality. It is somehow an essential and universal condition. This does not mean that every man is an out-and-out scoundrel. Kant holds no such gloomy view of human nature. But it does mean that the *possibility* of evil must somehow lie in human nature itself. And by evil we do not mean pain, disease, death, etc. No doubt these abound, but we are not concerned with them. Our concern is solely with moral evil, and "nothing is morally evil [i.e., capable of being imputed] but that which is our own *act*."[18] The evil whose possibility we must explain is a free act against good, and nothing else.

With this definition of evil Kant eliminates from the outset, as inadequate, a host of metaphysical theories. Evil cannot be located in a pre-existing cosmic principle, such as matter, the irrational, or non-being. These exist prior to my act of will, and independently of it. I am under their control, not they under mine. If they are the source of an evil, this is not moral evil. Anything which no will has freely chosen is not evil but innocent.

For the same reason, evil cannot lie in a pre-existing and unalterable condition within human nature. It cannot be, say, the limitation placed on human nature by the senses, a limitation distinguishing man from God. Man has not freely chosen this limitation, and is thus not responsible for it. Kant strongly attacks Stoicism which regards the passions *per se* as evil, and defines good in terms of their suppression by reason. The Stoic maligns what is innocent; and he arrogantly—and vainly—strives to escape from his human nature and become God.

Evil cannot lie in the sensible constituent of human nature; but neither can it lie in the other constituent, viz., reason. To explain evil, one might argue that reason in man is innately perverse; that, appre-

[17] *Schriften*, VI, 33, 34; *Religion*, 28 ff.
[18] *Schriften*, VI, 31; *Religion*, 26.

hending the moral law, it acts against it merely *because* it is the moral law, and that it does so necessarily. But in that case man could not help doing evil; to do so would be his very nature. And it would therefore not be his responsibility, but the responsibility of Him who created it.

Moreover, both these explanations fail to characterize evil in man as it really is. Evil is not the mere yielding to passion; it is more than that. But neither is it the sheer diabolic defiance of the moral law simply because it is the moral law; it is less than that. Man may do evil, but he is no demon. The one explanation asserts too little, the other too much. For man is neither animal nor devil.

In what, then, does evil consist? It lies in neither of the fixed constituents of human nature, but in a perversion of their original relation; and this perversion is brought about by man himself. Man is meant to subordinate his inclinations to the rule of the moral law. Wherever he actually does so, he is good, at least in principle. The categorical imperative, in all its purity, will be the maxim of his will. He may, of course, yield to inclination; but he will do so merely out of weakness. He can never wilfully deviate from the moral law. In sharp contrast, man may subordinate, not his inclinations to the moral law, but the moral law to his inclinations. Then he is not merely weak, but evil. For he wills freely, yet in a way involving departure from the moral law. As Kant puts it: "the proposition 'man is evil' can mean only, that he is conscious of the moral law, but has nevertheless adopted into his maxim the (occasional) deviation therefrom."[19]

Here then we have Kant's new and crucial formula. Man's choice is not between acting on the good as principle, or not on principle at all. The choice is not between a good will and the absence of will. Man always acts on principle and freely; and he is always responsible. But his principle will be either the moral law, pure and simple, or the deviation therefrom, occasional or otherwise. Man may thus decide freely, and yet against the moral law. In other words, he is free to choose between good and evil.

This new formula undoubtedly gives greater satisfaction to our moral consciousness. But can it be philosophically justified? Kant proceeds to consider its implications.

We have seen that the term "good" applies, properly, not to an action, but to the maxim of the will from which actions flow. Furthermore, by the term "maxim" we did not mean the haphazard motive inspiring an individual act, but a rational, over-all principle governing a man's life as a whole. The same considerations must now be applied to evil. "We call a man evil . . . not because he performs

[19] *Schriften*, VI, 32; *Religion*, 27.

actions that are . . . contrary to law, but because these actions are of such a nature that we may infer from them the presence in him of evil maxims."[20] Again, the term "maxim" must mean an over-all principle. No doubt individual motives inspiring individual actions may be considered in isolation; but since man is a rational being who lives by an over-all principle, this will be a superficial consideration. Thus the motive behind an individual action may be respect for duty; and it may yet flow from an over-all maxim which includes the deviation from duty on other occasions.

But if this be admitted, two startling conclusions follow. The first of these is that a man is either radically good or radically evil; the second, that all men are, in fact, evil.

A man's empirical actions may be partly good, partly evil, partly morally indifferent. But his underlying maxim cannot be partly good partly evil; and it certainly cannot be morally indifferent. For either his over-all principle is to follow the moral law without qualification, wherever it applies; or else he has included deviation from it among his principles. No doubt there are degrees of evil. The principle of one man will be to take but an occasional holiday from the moral law, and to take that with great qualms; whereas the principle of another will be to make the holiday permanent, and without any qualms whatever. Yet this difference in degree does not affect the principle. We are confronted with a radical "either-or." Either perversion has entered into a man's principles, or it has not. Man is either good or evil. There is no third alternative. As Kant says: "[man's] disposition in respect to the moral law is never indifferent."[21]

The second implication is even more startling. There can be no doubt that all men are evil. For even a single evil action presupposes the perversion of principles, and is impossible without it. We may regard our fellow-men sufficiently highly to believe that some of them sin very rarely. But surely we must admit that "there is no man who liveth and sinneth not."

At this point Kant is driven to a conclusion which may well seem paradoxical. He must maintain, on the one hand, that evil is innate in human nature and therefore radical; and, on the other hand, that it is nevertheless produced by each man in himself. Both assertions are necessary: the first, in order to explain the occurrence of any evil action; the second, in order to justify us in calling it evil.

If evil is not, in some sense, innate, then we are unable to explain how anyone could ever commit an evil act. A man would then either will the good or else not will. He would follow good maxims, or no maxims at all. In other words, we should be driven back to the

[20] *Schriften*, VI, 20; *Religion*, 16. [21] *Schriften*, VI, 24; *Religion*, 20.

original Kantian position which can explain only moral weakness, but not moral evil. Every genuinely evil act, no matter at what point in time we locate it, already presupposes the maxim to deviate from the moral law. It is that maxim, not the action itself, which is evil. And that maxim must, in some sense, be innate.

Yet it must be innate in quite a specific sense. As we have seen, evil cannot be a fixed part of human nature, existing independently of any act of the human will. Thus evil, though "radical, innate . . . in human nature, yet nonetheless is brought upon us by ourselves." Kant elaborates by affirming that evil is "termed innate only in this sense, that it is posited as the ground antecedent to every use of freedom in experience (in earliest youth as far back as our birth) and is thus conceived of as present in man at birth—which is not to say that birth is the cause of it."[22]

Perhaps it is well to give Kant's view a formulation in which the dubious term "innate" is avoided. A man's empirical and temporal actions are, in so far as they are morally relevant, merely the manifestation of a commitment to principles in which man determines what may be called his character. Such a commitment is the necessary presupposition of all moral life in the temporal and empirical world. But it is itself non-temporal and non-empirical, and known to us only by inference. That commitment consists in a radical decision, freely made, between good and evil. The empirical life lived by us all is of such a nature as to presuppose a decision for evil.

One question remains. Can a ground be discovered for this decision itself? Is there a higher principle determining the will in its decision? Kant's answer must be emphatically in the negative. If man's alternative consists in willing the good or not willing at all, then indeed there is a higher principle determining the will; it is the moral law itself. But if man chooses freely, either for or against the moral law, then there can be no higher determining principle. Then each decision of each man is a metaphysical ultimate; and whichever choice is made, it is an ultimate irrationality.

V

The doctrine of radical evil, as so far presented, has so close a resemblance to the Christian conception of original sin as to be practically indistinguishable from it. Kant himself refers to the biblical account of the fall.[23] Nevertheless, "radical evil" and "original sin" cannot be identified.

Original sin is a state in which I am obligated to a law which I am nevertheless unable to obey. It is a paradoxical condition. Man

[22] *Schriften*, VI, 32, 22; *Religion*, 28, 17. [23] *Schriften*, VI, 41 ff.; *Religion*, 36 ff.

can recognize, but not overcome, this condition; to overcome it requires an act of divine grace. To Kant the state of original sin is a moral and metaphysical impossibility. For he categorically denies the possibility of a situation in which there is a moral obligation without a corresponding moral freedom.

To be sure, man has brought radical evil upon himself. But if it is ineradicable ever after, then man's freedom has ceased with the first free act in which he chose evil; and along with his freedom, man's responsibility has disappeared as well. But, says Kant, "despite the fall, the injunction that we ought to become better men resounds unabatedly in our souls; hence this must be within our power." Elsewhere he says: "through no cause in the world can . . . [man] cease to be a freely acting being."[24] Through no cause: that is to say, not even through himself.

Kant's opposition to original sin is further illustrated by his general conception of religion. If sin is original, it follows that man must approach God primarily, not with his moral achievements, none of which are pure, but with the awareness of his sinfulness. And it follows further that God does not reward man according to merit; for man has no merit. God's gift to man is grace which, if and when it comes, is wholly unmerited.

In sharp contrast, Kant regards moral action as the core of the religious life. He defines religion as "the recognition of all duties as divine commands." And he denies the religious value of any activity other than moral action. "Whatever, over and above good conduct in life, man fancies that he can do to become well-pleasing to God is mere illusion and pseudo-service of God."[25] This pseudo-service presumably includes the sort of meditation and prayer in which man, recognizing his sinfulness, throws himself upon the mercy of God.

To be sure, Kant concedes that man is always imperfect; that he therefore requires divine aid; and that religion is the hope for such aid. But he denies that it is accessible in this life, and considers all supposed experience of it as sheer enthusiasm and illusion. Moreover, he regards it as harmful to think too frequently of God's future aid; such thoughts can only serve to induce moral lassitude. Indeed, our sole concern with God's future aid should be to live in such a way as to be worthy of it. Thus it does not really make any difference to the life we ought to live now whether this future divine aid—of which we can, in any case, form no conception—is fact or fancy. In order to live the good life now, we do not require it.

There is, then, a vast difference between original sin and Kant's

[24] *Schriften*, VI, 45, 41; *Religion*, 40, 36.
[25] *Schriften*, VI, 153, 170; *Religion*, 142, 158.

radical evil. Both doctrines assert a radical perversion in man as he is now, a perversion brought about by man himself. Both assert that, inasmuch as this perversion is radical, no mere gradual reform can eliminate it. To eliminate it requires a total act of conversion, an act of redemption, the creation of a new man. But whereas, according to Christian doctrine only God can redeem fallen man, Kant asserts, and must assert, that man can redeem himself.

But surely such an act of self-redemption is, according to Kant's own principles, utterly impossible! For Kant himself declares that "how it is possible for a naturally evil man to make himself a good man wholly surpasses our comprehension; for how can a bad tree bring forth good fruit?"[26] Kant has introduced radical evil because any empirical evil act already presupposes a perversion of principles in a man's intelligible character. How then can any empirical good action restore the original goodness of character? Indeed, how is any unqualifiedly good action possible? We seem here driven to a ludicrous conclusion: Kant has adopted radical evil in order to account for man's freedom for evil; yet this very doctrine now seems to leave freedom for good inexplicable. Are we to say that the philosopher can explain either man's freedom to do good, or to do evil, but not both?

Kant denies this fateful dilemma. True, man cannot wipe out radical evil in himself by gradual reform, by deviating in his actions less and less from the moral law. It is the maxim to deviate at all which must be abandoned, and this requires, not reform, but revolution, not growth, but rebirth, the creation, as it were, of a new man. But man himself can put on the new man. "A man [can] reverse . . ., by a single unchangeable decision, that highest ground of his maxims whereby he was an evil man (and thus put on the new man)."[27]

How this act of self-conversion is possible is utterly unintelligible. For no higher determining ground can be discovered for it. The ground is not the moral law; for this is not in itself a determining principle; nor is the ground man's previous character, for this is exactly what is evil and what he puts away. This revolution, then, is a sort of *creatio ex nihilo*. But then, in this regard the conversion toward good is exactly parallel to the original perversion toward evil. It too is an ultimate act of decision for which there is no higher ground.

Kant's doctrine of the possibility of conversion thus sheds a final light on his doctrine of radical evil. Evil is radical only in the sense

[26] *Schriften*, VI, 44 ff.; *Religion*, 40.
[27] *Schriften*, VI, 47 ff.; *Religion*, 43.

that at each moment we find that we have already committed evil; and we had to be evil in order to do it. But evil is not radical in the sense that we are not now responsible. On the contrary, in each empirical action, at every here and now, our whole being is at stake, and we are wholly responsible. "In the search for the rational origin of evil actions, every such action must be regarded as though the individual had fallen into it directly from a state of innocence."[28]

Kant thus places man in a cosmic position which is at once majestic and frightening. Everything in the universe is finished, from the lowliest plant to God Himself: everything but man. For what matters about man is not the finished constituents of his nature, but his character. And his character is not ready-made. Each man must make his own.

Finally the task confronting each man is not the comparatively harmless one of climbing up a ladder, as high as he is able. For his character will be not more or less developed, more or less pure, more or less good. His is the grim and radical choice between good and evil. No degrees of any sort soften the harshness of this "either-or." And even though man's temporal life is, as such, mere appearance, nevertheless any here and now may be the expression of a decision in his intelligible nature; and thus in any here and now eternity itself may be at stake. Nothing in heaven or earth is more important than the moment in which a man—any man—makes himself good or bad. And whenever a man makes such a decision, the universe, so to speak, holds its breath.

[28]*Schriften*, VI, 41; *Religion*, 36.

THE "HEROES" OF EDITH WHARTON

WINIFRED LYNSKEY

THOSE who admire Edith Wharton's art have always done so with reservations. Her sense of structure, her narrative gifts, her irony, her satiric pictures of a wealthy society, her scornful criticism of American materialism—all these have been evaluated and admired. But readers have never cared for Mrs. Wharton's heroes, for men like Laurence Selden, Ralph Marvell, and Newland Archer, who constitute a conspicuous male type in her novels. These sensitive, high-souled men are singularly bloodless and unappealing. In the *New Yorker* and also in *The Wound and the Bow*, Mr. Edmund Wilson has described the defects of the typical Wharton hero: ". . . the male type which most conspicuously recurs . . . is the cultivated, intelligent man who cannot bear to offend social convention, the reformer who gets bribed without knowing it in marrying a rich wife, the family man who falls in love with someone more exciting than his wife but hasn't the courage of his passion. . . . It is a phenomenon unfamiliar to Europe, this connoisseur whose culture is sterile, this idealist whose impulses are thwarted, this romantic who cannot act his romance. . . ."

These Wharton heroes, according to Mr. Wilson, owe their particular deficiencies to their deficient real-life model, Walter Berry. Now Walter Berry was Mrs. Wharton's life-long love. But Mr. Wilson finds him "dry, empty-hearted, and worldly, a pretentious and unlikable snob." Mr. Wilson assumes that Walter Berry failed Edith Wharton in his relationship with her. Although she chose him as a model for her heroes, she resented him so deeply that she castigated him again and again in her most prominent male type.

I find the psychology of Mrs. Wharton during this process a little confusing. According to Mr. Wilson, she consciously chose Berry as a model for a hero because she idealized him. Then, keenly aware of Berry's defects and resentful of his letting her down, she drew scornful portraits of him. Her psychology as she skilfully flayed the man whom Mr. Wilson admits "she loved for a lifetime, in youth and age," would be less incredible if part of her action had originated in her unconscious. But Mr. Wilson concedes Mrs. Wharton complete awareness of her motives.

Mr. Wilson's attempts to psycho-analyse Mrs. Wharton have always been balked by the lack of information about her private life. And no part of her private life is more obscure than her relationship

with Walter Berry. The well-bred reticence of Mrs. Wharton in *A Backward Glance* and of Mrs. Wharton's friends in Mr. Percy Lubbock's memoir is like an impenetrable shield. We do not know how Walter Berry failed Mrs. Wharton, if at all. We do not know how much she resented him, if at all. But we do know some things. Even in their well-bred reticence both Mrs. Wharton and her friends testify to the fact that Walter Berry was her life-long love. For twenty-seven years he was her mentor, guide, and friend. He inspired and shaped her career. And in an autobiography which is on most counts a masterpiece of chilled restraint, Mrs. Wharton wrote of him: "Walter Berry was not a separate person . . . but an expansion, an interpretation, of one's self, the very meaning of one's soul. . . . I cannot picture what the life of the spirit would have been to me without him. He found me when my mind and soul were hungry and thirsty, and he fed them till our last hour together. It is such comradeships, made of seeing and dreaming, and thinking and laughing together, that make one feel that for those who have shared them there can be no parting." Edith Wharton lies buried beside Walter Berry.

Edith Wharton's devotion to the man she loved is a fact. Her alleged bitter resentment is a psychiatric surmise. Mr. Wilson's theory about Mrs. Wharton ignores the fact that her heroes were heroic to her. They could not be otherwise. A Wharton hero has an integral part in the plot and theme of the novel. If he is not permitted to play the role assigned to him, if he is not permitted to carry the heavy burden of the novel's theme, then her novels become so distorted as to be meaningless.

To most readers, however, the bloodless Wharton hero is not a first-rate man. But if Mrs. Wharton took a model from life for him, she chose no one but herself. The profiles of Mrs. Wharton and the Wharton hero are distressingly similar. I say "distressingly similar" because the Archers, Seldens, and Marvells are, at best, cold and unapproachable and possessed of a painful moral and aesthetic superiority. Mrs. Wharton's heroes are deficient as men because they are not men. They are a sentimental projection of herself. In his spiritual and ethical biography, in his emotional frustration, and in his adjustment or compensation, a Wharton hero bears a close resemblance to his creator.

The life of a Wharton hero is a struggle to escape from the stultifying environment of a wealthy society into a world of artistic and moral values. For twenty years of her adult life, Mrs. Wharton engaged in a similar struggle. When the smoke of battle had cleared away, Mrs. Wharton was where she had longed to be, the centre of a brilliant literary circle. Her husband had suffered a mental derange-

ment which caused him to be confined. No one has ever assumed that her husband was a casualty of Mrs. Wharton's long battle. He represented, however, one of the principal forces she fought against.

If the Wharton hero does not yearn to express his aesthetic leanings through literary channels, he is, at least, decidedly bookish. Ralph Marvell in *The Custom of the Country* is typical. Like Newland Archer he discovers that merely earning money, even as a lawyer, does not produce a satisfactory life. Ralph's "profession was the least real thing in his life. The realities lay behind him now: the books jamming his old college bookcases and overflowing on chairs and tables; sketches too—he could do charming things, if only he had known how to finish them!—and, on the writing table at his elbow, scattered sheets of prose and verse; charming things also, but like the sketches, unfinished."

Knowing a wealthy society for what it is, the Wharton hero tries to turn his back on it. He despises money. He follows the advice of Edith Wharton's mother to her little girl: "Never talk about money and think about it as little as possible." Yet, like Edith Wharton, he owes his leisure and his high, even luxurious standard of living to the sordid money-making propensities which he feels are threatening to possess his soul.

The Wharton hero is attracted to or has married a beautiful woman whose favourite background is jewels, furs, motors, the opera, elaborate social entertainments—such a woman as Lily Bart, May Welland, Undine Spragg. His aesthetic and moral values are thus thrown into a life and death struggle with a crass materialism. Mrs. Wharton's experience was the same. Born into a wealthy and exclusive social group, she married a man who was a member of that group. Her life until her early thirties was, as she says, one of "complete intellectual isolation." Her ultimate success testifies to the force of her drive.

In his battle against a deadening materialism, the typical Wharton hero does not struggle alone. He finds a rare woman with a luminous name like Clare Van Degen, Ellen Olenska, or Halo Spear, whose inspiration strengthens his morality and develops his aestheticism. When Mrs. Wharton's aesthetic and cultural values met a sharp opposition in her marriage, she fought her way into the intellectual and artistic atmosphere she craved. And she did not fight alone. Her art was developed and cultivated by a group of men of whom Walter Berry was both the first and the most important. If Newland Archer had his Ellen Olenska, Mrs. Wharton had her Walter Berry. Like Edith Wharton, Newland Archer was an unwilling prisoner of a

wealthy society. He longed to escape from his conventional life, where intellectual and spiritual awareness died of tedium and frustration. Ellen Olenska opened before him a world of freedom, where the soul could expand. When, because of his marriage, he was denied Ellen and her inspiration, he resolutely built a secret world of his own, "a kind of sanctuary in which she [Ellen] was throned among his secret thoughts and longings. Little by little it became the scene of his real life, of his only rational activities; thither he brought the books he read, the ideas and feelings which nourished him, his judgments and his visions." Anyone who has read Mrs. Wharton's autobiography will recall how she brought to Walter Berry the books she read, the ideas and feelings which nourished her, her judgments and her visions. Most important, she brought to Walter Berry her manuscripts.

I have said that the heroes of Mrs. Wharton seem to be a projection of herself. The women who inspire the heroes seem to be a projection of Walter Berry. These women are conspicuously alike, even physically. They are all dark and slender, with thin, brown, nervous hands. They all try to save a gifted man from a stifling material civilization. They inspire, shape, and guide. And they play a subordinate role in the plot. Walter Berry, as he inspired and guided Mrs. Wharton, also played a subordinate role. The literary artist renowned in America, England, and Europe, was Edith Wharton, not Walter Berry. One thing is very clear in Mrs. Wharton's restrained autobiography: behind her serene poise, her somewhat domineering charm, her feminine beauty, lay an ego nourished by introspection, an ego strong enough to beat down the difficulties of her birth, background, wealth, friends, family, and husband. She never played a subordinate role in her life.

The Wharton hero has a favourite background, a beloved library, remarkable for its selection of books. In his intellectual and cultural haven, he lives and moves and has his being. His library is his *métier*, the "secret garden" where his soul is most peculiarly his own. Here in his library the Wharton hero lives—and dies. It is a curious thing, indeed, this recurrence of the library as a setting in a Wharton crisis. In *The House of Mirth*, Laurence Selden retreats to his library, where he can invite his aesthetic soul and close his ears to the imploring tones of Lily Bart. In Selden's library, under Selden's eyes, Lily Bart burns the letters of Bertha Dorset. In that act she really dies. It is her atonement for her ethical failures. In *The Age of Innocence*, Newland Archer woos Ellen Olenska in her beautiful library. In his own library, Archer faces the crisis of his love for Ellen. There May destroys his

plan for a rendezvous with Ellen. There May reveals that she is to have a child and thus shuts out Ellen forever. In *The Custom of the Country*, Ralph Marvell, sick unto death with disillusionment, kills himself in his library.

Someone may protest that the wealthy homes of which Mrs. Wharton writes would naturally have libraries. But the curious thing is that in her novels only the children of light have libraries and use them. It is their seal. Mrs. Wharton might never have become a writer without the library of her father, which she first entered as an extremely intelligent little girl of eight. She devotes an entire chapter of her autobiography to "the kingdom of my father's library." According to her own testimony, this magnificent collection of volumes, where she roamed at will in her girlhood, determined the course of her life.

The parallels I have mentioned are too definite to be ignored. Edith Wharton's chief male type, so shrewdly described by Mr. Wilson, is dry and unappealing because he is a sentimental projection of herself. When she got outside herself and drew Julius Beaufort, Sim Rosedale, and Gus Trenor, all of whom she despised, she did fairly well by her men characters. These crass and beefy men have an appealing honesty. But the spirit that wrote Mrs. Wharton's best novels was, as Mr. Wilson says, truly "vexed and aggrieved." It could not rest. And thus she created and re-lived again and again her own personal struggle. She re-told the story as late as 1929, in *Hudson River Bracketed*, when she was a woman of sixty-seven. Most of the fire of the struggle is gone. And there are changes in the pattern. Mrs. Wharton now permits divorce. She chooses her middle-class hero, Vance Weston, from a Middle Western community instead of from the upper reaches of old and exclusive New York society. Selden, Marvell, and Archer were all lawyers; Weston is a writer. But some of the same parallels appear. Vance Weston, an aspiring literary artist, comes into a great library in an old mansion on the Hudson. Here he finds not only the books which awaken him but also the woman, Halo, who inspires and shapes his career. Weston resists all degrading influences in the literary world and under the guidance of Halo writes his great novel.

Edith Wharton probably paid a price for choosing herself as a model for her heroes. Her artistic lapse took its toll in her bloodless, brittle characterizations. Her heroes lack the stature of men. But she may have paid an even greater price in theme and subject-matter. Had she got outside herself, she might have responded to the subject that lay before her, the struggle of a dying society, her own society. "Her class was dying slowly . . . and passing on to another existence," writes Mr. Kazin in his book *On Native Grounds*. The subject was

monumental. But she truly could not or did not see the forest for the trees.

Nevertheless, she did see some things. Her criticism of materialism in America precedes that of Dreiser or Lewis. It is no accident that Sinclair Lewis dedicated *Babbitt* to Edith Wharton. Edith Wharton had also described a materially successful but spiritually moribund existence. Babbitt's life is impoverished because he has no culture; it is unstable and meaningless because he knows no ethics. Lewis recognized in Edith Wharton a kindred spirit, rather, I should say, a kindred animus. In spite of her unrealistic heroes, her contribution to realistic American literature is secure.

One last parallel remains to be considered. How does a Wharton hero adjust to his frustrations and defeats? Here again, in his emotional frustration and in his adjustment or compensation, he bears a close resemblance to his creator. The Wharton hero usually suffers severe emotional frustration. He never attains the woman he loves, the woman who has inspired him and helped him to develop. Honour, ethics, morality, duty, all of these plus a disapproval of divorce play their part in the separation. He is not permitted even a temporary, though unconventional, union with the woman he loves. The restraint with which the hero conducts himself in his emotional crisis may be responsible for Mr. Wilson's characterization of him as "a romantic who cannot act his romance," because he "hasn't the courage of his passion." Edith Wharton seems also to have been deprived of the man she loved, the man who had inspired her and helped her to develop her art. Honour, morality, duty—all of these, plus the social stigma of divorce, may have been responsible for the separation.

Edith Wharton's frustrations were apparently of two kinds, the one intellectual and aesthetic, the other personal. The extent of her frustrations is an open question. True, her struggle against intellectual and artistic frustration lasted twenty or twenty-five years. The bitterness of the struggle may be reflected in the brilliance of her success in her own time. There is nothing like an obstacle to call forth hidden energy. But she won. She got what she wanted. With the aid of many friends, of whom Walter Berry was the most important, she saved herself from the "prison of the moneyed world," which would have stifled her gifts. Her husband seems to have borne the greater frustration. According to Mrs. Wharton's autobiography, he enjoyed Newport and its society (as she did not). His "sporting interests" in London naturally did not include James or Sturgis. After twelve years of "trying to adjust" to a husband whose tastes were "suited" to "watering-place trivialities," Mrs. Wharton published *The Greater Inclination*.

The pendulum of her marriage began to swing in the direction of her own greater inclination. There followed for her, almost immediately, trips to London for literary stimulus, the deserting of Newport for a home in the country, the growth of her literary and artistic circle. In this atmosphere her husband would have been bewildered and unhappy, as bewildered and unhappy as Mrs. Wharton had been in the early years of her marriage.

The extent of her personal frustration because of Walter Berry is not known. Her adjustment to the situation may have been complete or at least satisfactory. She may have had the solace an artist finds in self-expression. She may also have accepted an ethical and romantic "vision" as a comforting reality. Many a Jamesian character would have done so. And many of her own characters did so. Through her stories and novels pass men and women who accept a moral intangible as a satisfying reality. They behave like Newland Archer, who sits on a bench in a Paris square, refusing to meet again his life-long love, Ellen Olenska. He waits while his son enters a house to meet the only real and beautiful thing in Newland's life, of which duty had deprived him a quarter of a century before. " 'It's more real to me here than if I went up,' he suddenly heard himself say; and the fear that the last shadow of reality should lose its edge kept him rooted to his seat as the minutes succeeded each other." Ellen had herself prepared Newland for this mood. At the height of their passion, twenty-five years before, she would not consent to become his mistress. Newland's wife was her cousin; honour and duty forbade. Ellen had said to Newland, "We're near each other only if we stay far from each other."

In "The Touchstone," "The Muse's Tragedy," "The Fulness of Life," "The Hermit and the Wild Woman," in many a story or novel, a Wharton character adjusts to life's disappointments by accepting a romantic intangible. In *The Old Maid*, published when she was sixty-two, Mrs. Wharton hammers hard at her principle. In this triangle Clement Spender loves Delia, who marries another. In his unhappiness Clem turns to Charlotte, who bears his child out of wedlock. The child, guided by Mrs. Wharton's metaphysics, finds her "real" mother in Delia. Charlotte, who knew the reality and bore the child, had not had Clem's love. She remains all her life an old maid, dry, half alive. When her child turns from her in bitter aversion, Charlotte cries to Delia in Mrs. Wharton's italics: ". . . *which of us is her mother?*" The love of Clement Spender belonged intangibly and spiritually to Delia. The coveted "reality" is Delia's. The child is spiritually and therefore "really" Delia's. Delia had the "vision" of Clem's love and the reality—most "real" because intangible.

In *Ethan Frome*, the greatest tragedy is not that Mattie died, but that she lived. Had she died, Ethan Frome would have had his beautiful memory, his "reality," his "springtime," forever. It is possible that Edith Wharton accepted the "vision" of Walter Berry's love as a moral intangible more "real" and permanent than the reality could have been. It is possible that no one has behaved more like a Wharton character than Edith Wharton herself. Her final gesture, when she chose her last resting place by Walter Berry, could have been the close of any one of her novels.

THE CHARACTERS OF ALBERT CAMUS

S. John

PHYSICAL excitation, a wealth of tactile impressions, an atmosphere saturated with light—these constitute the world of Albert Camus' early essays. Everything there is palpable. Yet, curiously, in the very detail with which Camus records the reactions of the physical senses lies a clue to the abstraction of his later work. Intensity of sensation takes the place of the rhythm and warmth of life; feeling is submerged in the flux of the senses. Once Camus enters the imaginative world of his own creation, his characters fall victim to that passion for the abstract which, in the aggregate, lends his novels and plays a sort of intense monotony.

Part of this monotony he prepares us for early in his career: "On vit avec quelques idées familières. Deux ou trois. Au hasard des mondes et des hommes rencontrés, on les polit, on les transforme. Il faut dix ans pour avoir une idée bien à soi — dont on puisse parler."[1] However, the monotony does not lie in the fewness of the philosophical notions which dominate Camus' imaginative writing, as much as in the narrowness of the fictional world which he creates around them. A handful of ideas, often quite commonplace, working themselves out in a variety of characters and situations might be said to provide the motive power of many of our literary masterpieces. What, for instance, do Balzac or Zola represent except the obsessed return to the same ideas? But their few ideas are worked out in characters and situations of such richness, complexity and variousness that the reader is constantly entering new worlds and meeting the ideas as though afresh. Camus' characters do not leave this impression. They exist somewhere between the conventions of allegory and the blank, archetypal world of Joseph K in Kafka's *The Trial*. They lack the total artificiality of the former and the claustrophobic obsession of the latter. Even so, Camus' commitment to certain ideas has the result of forcing his characters into rigid patterns, whereas in Balzac or Zola the ideas are articulated through creatures of flesh and blood who impose themselves upon the imagination of the reader. If Camus' characters do not live in the same way, it is because they are too frequently conceived as the mere vehicles of their creator's message—for in Camus' ideas lies a moral evangelism that permeates his work. His characters

[1]Albert Camus, "Le Vent à Djémila," in *Noces* (nouvelle édition, Paris, 1950), 35.

are the vehicles and Camus' plays and novels the impassioned theorems of that philosophy of the absurd with which he has become associated.

This philosophy, imaginatively coherent but logically brittle, is at once the child of nihilism and its intended destroyer. Its origins are to be found in the early experiences of a poor and talented young Algerian, born into the brilliant light and punishing heat of a Mediterranean landscape. It begins in the explosion of the senses, in a vivid pantheism, the dazzling notations of which fill every page of Camus' early essays: *L'Envers et l'Endroit* (1937) and *Noces* (1938). The lessons which Camus draws from this pantheism are obvious enough. There is the rejection of God and the dismissal of the notion of eternal life as a pious fiction intended to reconcile men to death and to resign them to a life corroded by that foreknowledge of death which man alone of the earth's creatures possesses. Death is the only certainty and the paramount evil, while the one certain good is the joy of the physical senses.

The early Camus preaches a gospel of immediacy of feeling which, in the light of his own intellectual sophistication at the period, is not always free from an arch and studied primitivism. When he exalts the random and hearty physical appetites of his friend Vincent, "qui est tonnelier et champion de brasse junior," one is made painfully aware of the narrow distance that separates simplicity from sheer simple-mindedness. Often, the repeated sensual delight which Camus conveys so powerfully seems a little lacking in spontaneity, as if it were the deliberate and desperate tactic of a philosophical mind bent on countering death. As they emerge from these essays, the moral virtues to which Camus gives adherence include: manly courage, concern for the weak (especially women and the aged), love of personal liberty, and, finally, the spirit of revolt. These virtues imply a supreme virtue in whose service they may be conscripted—the conquest of human happiness. In admitting the possibility of human happiness, Camus reveals an optimistic bias which modifies, without fundamentally changing, his tragic vision of life.

The precariousness of this happiness and the struggle needed to attain it are made more explicit in Camus' first formal essay in philosophy, *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942). This begins with an irreducible question: is life worth living? Camus proceeds to answer it by admitting that the position of man in the world is absurd. The world of elements, trees, beasts, acceptable enough when considered without reference to man, appears quite incompatible with his existence. The sense of the absurd is, therefore, generated in the encounter between

man, with his innate need of order and reason, and the chaos and irrationalism of the rest of nature. For Camus, the recognition of this fundamental absurdity of life is a state of grace, rather like the "nausea" and "anguish" of Sartre's characters. In the frank recognition of the absurd lies the only possibility of wisdom and happiness, though this does not imply resignation to the absurd order of the world. Man should both recognize the absurdity and constantly revolt against it. This is the only life, even if it is absurd, and, so long as it is viewed as a "champ clos" from which death is rigorously excluded, happiness and liberty are alike possible. They are to be achieved, beyond hope or despair, by living intensely in the present in a persistent tension of revolt.

The dangers inherent in this gospel of immediacy are frankly faced in Camus' *Lettres à un ami allemand* (1945), a series of letters written during a critical period in recent history—from July, 1943 to July, 1944. The recognition that Nazi conquests were the outcome of a sort of "philosophy of the absurd," forces Camus to examine even more closely the morality of revolt. He realizes that disaster attends on the belief that all values are equivalent and therefore argues that revolt against the absurd order of existence is justifiable only if it seeks to create a specifically human justice and happiness to impose upon the fundamental injustice and misery of the universe. Unlike the existentialist, man in Camus' philosophy does not invent his own justice to impose on the world, but affirms in the act of revolt and protest an innate sense of justice in himself which the existing order affronts. Camus, in a word, implies a transcendent morality. From this point onwards in his intellectual development, he moves away from the idea of a total metaphysical revolt which characterized his earlier thought. This intellectual progress is reflected in the pages of his post-war journalism, collected in 1950 under the title, *Actuelles: Chroniques 1944–1948*, and, more systematically, in the pages of *L'Homme révolté* (1951).

Two principles govern and inform Camus' political journalism: a strict compassion, free of either sentimentality or religiosity, and a scrupulous respect for the human person which he defends against the murderous logic of totalitarian thinking, whether of the Right or of the Left. The method which he suggests to combat political absolutism is that of the honest inter-traffic of minds, the intellectual dialogue. He constantly returns to this concept in his articles and lectures. The "dialogue" represents at once a method and a symbol of integrity and sanity in a world given over to the fever of competing fanaticisms, each offering an exclusive form of salvation. Where "dialogue" spells

hope, exchange of ideas, revolution by consent, silence signifies fear, the closed mind, the methods of the police-state and, finally, the sacrifice of the present generation to the exigencies and logic of a deified history. Dialogue is life; silence is equated with dread and separation and suggests a terrible fatality: "Nous étouffons parmi les gens qui croient avoir absolument raison, que ce soit dans leurs machines ou dans leurs idées. Et pour tous ceux qui ne peuvent vivre que dans le dialogue et dans l'amitié des hommes, ce silence est la fin du monde."[2]

L'Homme révolté sums up Camus' progress to date as a writer concerned with the fate of man. It sets out to show that man's revolt, so ardently approved by Camus when it is a metaphysical revolt directed against the absurdity and injustice of the human predicament, has tended to assume the exclusive shape of political revolution. Political revolutions harden into power-systems which deny and oppress man. Revolution has perverted moral revolt. It has become the unjust law against which moral revolt must constantly be aimed. In revolt, man simply affirms his refusal to be reduced to a *thing*; he affirms his human dignity, whereas revolution is characterized by the violence it does to the human person. Total revolt has bred monsters because it has issued in revolution, with all its excesses and inhuman abstraction. To survive and be justified, the impulse to rebellion must recognize limits.

There is nothing novel in all this. It reflects the reactions of a sensitive and intelligent artist who has shared in and survived a period of violent social and political upheaval. It is the classical response to fanatically ambitious policies of experiment and change. From the doctrinaire (rather than the political) Left, it was challenged as the tritest conservativism by André Breton, who attacked as meaningless any concept of revolt which could also include the idea of limit. Camus' conclusions are, in fact, banal. Their relevance to the contemporary European reader lies more in their timing than in their content. They are platitudes (though ingeniously elaborated) that we have neglected at terrible cost and that may be well worth restating at this time. As for his being a timid moderate, the "Duhamel of his generation," Camus might argue that his position is not a passive or negative one, but a constant creative tension between the twin poles of extremism.

Camus' is an intellectual "confession d'un enfant du siècle." It begins with the most radical of philosophical ambitions—a total revolt against man's absurd existence—and ends with an overwhelming

[2]Albert Camus, "Le Siècle de la Peur," reprinted in *Actuelles: Chroniques 1944–1948* (Paris, 1950), 144.

sense of the dangers bred by the rage for the absolute. The emphasis in this unfolding thought has shifted from the personal to the collective, from the individual rebel pitted against the absurd order of life to the single man as implicated in human solidarity. Revolt and the conquest of happiness are alike related to a larger principle. This principle is human love, by which man affirms human solidarity in the act of renunciation and which Camus' Catholic critics, in particular, have seen as verging on the Christian concept of charity.

It is these ideas, painfully acquired in the search for a way out of nihilism, which form the organizing principle in Camus' creation of characters. We may crystallize them around the following themes: the figuration of estrangement; the revolt against the arbitrary or the absurd; the protest against authority and the unjust law; and, finally, the defence of the sanctity of human life, especially as involved in the problem of ends and means. The central irony unifying these themes derives, first from the consciousness of the ambiguity (one might even say the anomalous nature) of man's existence in the world; and, secondly, from the sense of disparity which exists between man's innate need of order and purpose and the irrationalism of the universe which surrounds him. Camus' characters are simply graphic forms of these philosophical and abstract themes, and they emerge as types persistently repeated in the various novels and plays. Camus' ideas are not diffused through his characters but concentrated in them, so that they seem to exist only at one level, the representational, and to lack the possibilities of surprise or renewal.

The first of these types is the *archetype of estrangement*. Its most ambitious realization is the character of Mersault in Camus' first novel, *L'Etranger* (1942). In this work, the notion of estrangement emerges from the deliberate juxtaposition of two conflicting views of the same set of circumstances. First, there is Mersault's dry, personal account of his own activities and reactions, from the burial of his aged mother (whom he had placed in a public institution) and his liaison with a young typist, Marie, to the murder of an unknown Arab, met by accident as a result of Mersault's very indifferent friendship with a shady neighbour named Raymond. Then, there are the multiple and more sinister versions of these same actions and reactions as seen through other eyes: those of the examining magistrate before Mersault's trial and those of the public prosecutor and of the hostile witnesses during the trial. This device is admirably suited to convey the mutual incomprehension of men in the world and the ambiguity and absurdity of all human actions. No attempt is made to explain and the reader must abandon the criteria which might be appropriate to

the novel of psychological realism. Mersault is nothing in himself. He is significant only for what he represents. He is an opaque character, obscurely attributing his murderous shots to the presence of the sun, and constantly deficient, both in his response to human reality and in his capacity to establish the connexions between things. He moves, as if in a trance, through a world full of mechanical or meaningless gestures; a tragically *elliptical* world in which he incarnates the myth of the absurd.

Le Malentendu (1944) provides an even more scarifying and geometric illustration of the "philosophy of the absurd." Martha and her mother keep an inn in a lonely region of Czechoslovakia and habitually murder for gain the unaccompanied travellers who lodge with them. Martha's brother, Jan, returning home after a protracted absence, presents himself at the inn without disclosing his identity and is murdered by his mother and sister who have failed to recognize him. His wife, who has spent the night at another inn, arrives next morning and reveals his true identity. Martha expresses no remorse and offers the distraught widow no consolation, but insists, on the contrary, that guilt and blame alike are irrelevant since what has happened is in the very nature of human existence, which is that of perpetual estrangement and tragic absurdity. This is philosophical melodrama as its most extravagant and didactic. No human frailty mitigates the actions of Martha or adds warmth to the play's despairing rhetoric. At no point do the human world and the blank universe of myth coincide.

Whereas the archetypes of estrangement convey, at its most general and at its greatest tension, the idea of an elliptical and absurd world, Camus' *grotesques* supply the detail of man's experience of the absurd at a more humdrum level. His dominant characters, those most significant in terms of his ideas, are always at the centre of extreme situations, while his grotesques (though frequently implicated in the same situations), are normally on the periphery. His grotesques, in short, are minor but graphic manifestations of the themes of estrangement and absurdity.

One of these grotesques is Salamano in *L'Etranger*, inseparable from his mangy spaniel which he persistently vilifies and belabours. He and the dog are ironically portrayed as having grown to resemble each other. Both walk with outstretched necks, and the falling hair and discoloured patches on the spaniel's coat match Salamano's thinning yellowish hair and the red blotches on his face. Despite his constant abuse of the dog, Salamano is distracted when he loses it. His neighbour, Mersault, hears him sobbing in his room. Both pathos and gro-

tesque absurdity attach to the relations between man and dog. Life with the spaniel alone mitigates Salamano's loneliness in society and masks the emptiness of his existence.

The curious little woman who shares Mersault's table at a restaurant reflects, in her oddity, something of the meaninglessness of human activity. Her eyes are feverishly bright, her gestures abrupt like those of an automaton, her speech rapid and nervous. She orders all her courses at once, carefully extracts the exact amount of money necessary to pay for the meal and the tip and places it on the table. Then, in the intervals between courses, each of which she gulps down hurriedly, she produces a list of radio-programmes and, with meticulous fury, ticks off almost every item with her blue pencil. Once she has finished eating, she rises quickly and makes off with precise, hurried movements. By confining himself to the dry, almost pedantic, observation of this woman's external gestures, Camus suggests admirably the sense of the arbitrary.

In *La Peste*, the element of the grotesque enters into Tarrou's description of the man who spends his time slyly spitting on cats from his balcony. The formal cut of his clothes, his rather severe and military appearance are comically at variance with his actions. He coaxes the dozing cats to him with little, gentle calls and, when they fail to respond, tears up paper and scatters it to attract their attention. They advance to claw the drifting paper and he showers them with spittle before returning to his room in evident glee.

An even more memorable grotesque is the asthmatic Spaniard who is one of Dr. Rieux's regular patients. At fifty he had retired from his haberdashery business and, without any medical necessity, had promptly taken to his bed, an action not entirely surprising to his wife who had long ago divined her husband's total indifference to the world of work, women, and entertainment. At seventy-five he continues to sit propped up in bed, living off a small private income. He hates clocks and watches and allows none in his house, preferring to measure time by transferring peas, one by one, with a precise and methodical movement, from a full saucepan on his bed to an empty one. He gauges his mealtimes—the only occasions of any importance, so far as he is concerned—by the number of empty saucepans he has filled. The one ambition of this asthmatic recluse is to live to be a very old man.

But it is Grand, a local government employee, who represents Camus' most successful creation in the grotesque vein. Though conceived with real pathos, Grand is a first-rate comic figure. This lean, stringy clerk with big ears, tranquil and modest in his courage, con-

stantly ready to give his energies to the task of fighting the plague in Oran, holds the attention, engages the sympathy, and creates the impression of human reality as no other character in Camus succeeds in doing. He is lonely, with a tale of broken marriage in his past. He is badly used by his superiors who trade on his diffidence and integrity. He is aware of their shabby treatment of him and of the assurances of promotion originally given him, but his desire to make a protest is always frustrated by the inadequacy of language. He fails to draft the necessary letter to his superiors because he is unable to find a formula that will advance his claims without positing them as rights or that will express the modesty of his demands without seeming obsequious. He walks as if he preferred not to be noticed, keeping close to the wall in a gliding motion that recalls the shadowy progress of a young candidate for the priesthood. The gait mirrors the man. He is retiring, self-effacing in all matters except his literary ambitions. Where these are concerned, he is exigent, nourished on a fantastic dream of literary perfection, a private mania that obliges him endlessly to correct the fatuous opening sentence of his "masterpiece." He is a comic Flaubert.

The tragedy common to Camus' grotesques is their failure to communicate adequately with other human beings. Grand's abortive literary venture symbolizes this failure in the most explicit fashion, as does his inability to write the letter which may reconcile him with his wife, Jeanne. All the grotesques experience partial or entire estrangement from their fellows but, while this estrangement is willed in the case of the asthmatic patient, it is involuntary in the others. Again, they are united in their common search for distraction (one recalls the *divertissement* of Pascal's *Apology*), by which they attempt to mask the reality of their human condition. The eccentric diner's radio-programmes, the man-on-the-balcony's cats, the asthmatic's peas—what do these distractions represent except that failure, which Camus so strongly condemns elsewhere, to acknowledge and outface the absurd? It is in this sense that the grotesques, though a minor variant of the archetypes of estrangement, do not attain the tragic status which Camus clearly intends for the latter. Awareness is necessary to tragic heroes. So long as Mersault continues to behave as if he were an unreflecting *thing* in nature, he fails to reach tragic significance. This he achieves in some degree—if we grant Camus' definition of what is tragic in the human predicament—only during that interval between his sentence and his execution when, in a sudden access of lucidity, his whole being is flooded with the indignant awareness of his doom. In spite of this difference in intensity, Camus' grotesques belong natu-

rally to his gallery of estranged creatures. They are observed with pathos and even, as in Grand's case, with compassion.

The characters examined so far are, in varying degrees, the involuntary subjects of the experience of estrangement and they register the fact of life's absurdity in their acts and ideas. They form the first of those two opposed categories of experience which make up the central dichotomy in Camus' fiction. The second derives from the protest against the absurd, whether as contained in the baffling order of the universe or as reduced to the concrete forms of human institutions. The revolt against the arbitrary and the protest against authority are natural allies, drawing life from a common refusal to accept the mutilation of man. These impulses issue in a set of characters who manifest revolt and justify their lives by it. Grouped about them are another range of characters who accept the existing order, out of fear and self-interest or out of a total failure to repose any faith in man.

The *metaphysical rebel* represents Camus' most powerful incarnation of the spirit of protest. We meet him first in the person of the lunatic Roman emperor who gives his name to Camus' second play, *Caligula* (1945). The gratuitous reign of terror and macabre practical jokes launched on Rome by Caligula are provoked by his experience of the ineluctable fact of death—the death of his sister, Drusilla, with whom he has been enjoying an incestuous union. His exceptional position in society, with its freedom from material cares and from domination by superiors, makes Caligula a peculiarly apt instrument of the "pure" metaphysical revolt. Drusilla's death brings him up sharply against the central absurdity of existence: "Les hommes meurent et ils ne sont pas heureux." Caligula therefore embarks upon the monstrous project of rivalling the absurd order of the world. The only effective liberty he can envisage is that of acting arbitrarily—producing an artificial famine, murdering an innocent old man, making attendance at state-brothels compulsory, or performing a blasphemous parody of the cult of Venus. The mad excesses of his plan provoke the opposition that finally extinguishes him. The rage for the absolute is doomed, even when it is rooted in the passion of revolt. Pity for madness cannot be unrelated either to its genesis or to its consequences and so, the fate of Caligula never engages the imagination, let alone the sympathy, of the spectator. It is impossible to identify him with the human world. He is impressive, if at all, as a mythical creature embodying the revolt against the absurd.

In *La Peste* (1947) Dr. Rieux has less exorbitant ambitions. He feels that in the very act of exercising his profession as a doctor he strikes a blow against suffering and evil—all that is arbitrary and ex-

poses man to humiliation and death. He is too clear-sighted to harbour illusions, recognizing that his victories are precarious and temporary. In combating the arbitrary, he affirms his solidarity with the "defeated and humiliated," and helps to create the happiness which is man's goal. The plague and the town of Oran itself have a vivid and portentous life of their own and Rieux is seen against the background of this collective life. We follow his patient and stubborn progress through the plague-ridden streets; sense the intimate but undemonstrative relations which exist between him and his mother; witness the angry pity which he experiences at the death of an innocent child. He is the leader of a tiny group of dedicated men, committed to moral revolt and stubbornly resisting the plague, which may be viewed as a natural calamity, an allegory on totalitarian oppression, or a more general figuration of evil. It is impossible not to sympathize with the principles and attitudes that Rieux evinces, but can he be truly said to live? He remains "flat," lacking in complexity and surprise; an eloquent voice in the desert.

In the same way, Diégo, the central figure of the play, *L'Etat de siège* (1948), lacks human warmth and idiosyncrasy. He is a set of principles on legs, unreal even at the moment of his challenge to the allegorical Plague who rules the city of Cadiz like a drill-sergeant. Insipid in his relations with his fiancée, Victoria; hectic and theatrical in his speech, Diégo patently demonstrates that he exists only in virtue of the idea he represents. Neither in his loving, his fighting, nor even in his dying does he move us. He remains an ideological puppet through which the idea of revolt is articulated. If at one level Diégo expresses the metaphysical protest, at another—in his opposition to the actual government of the Plague—he reflects the social and political protest . Cadiz is subjected to a crazy and inhuman bureaucracy, the aim of which is to terrify and exhaust the citizens into believing that they are guilty by the very fact of being. This government is satirized quite brilliantly by Camus, especially in a scene of sustained vaudeville when a fisherman applies for permission to continue to follow his craft and is refused until he can produce a "certificat d'existence," granted only if he is able to justify his right to be alive at all.

The most developed type of political rebel is, however, the young and idealistic Russian terrorist, Ivan Kaliayev, hero of Camus' play *Les Justes* (1950). He is the "delicate murderer" who has volunteered to assassinate the Grand Duke but who recoils on finding the Duke is accompanied by two young children. His failure provokes a violent debate on the problem of ends and means in which Kaliayev is attacked by Stepan, a veteran revolutionary who is prepared to subor-

dinate everything to the final victory of the Cause. Ivan wishes to be a killer and just, a murderer and innocent. Stepan denies that this is possible. It is indeed difficult to avoid feeling that there is much confusion in the inspiration which permits Ivan to agree to murder the Duke, while restraining his hand against children.

At his second attempt, Ivan succeeds in killing the Grand Duke. He is then captured and submitted to a peculiarly subtle interrogation by Skouratov, the chief of police, who is concerned to make concrete and personal all Kaliayev's idealistic abstractions and hence, to induce in him remorse. Neither a macabre encounter with the prison executioner nor a tense interview with the widowed Grand Duchess succeeds in shaking Kaliayev's resolve not to betray his confederates. But the disparity between the ideals of revolt and the brute fact of murder is ironically emphasized. Ivan's evident love of life, his compassion for the oppressed and humiliated, his dream of an innocent society—all compel affection, and there are moments, especially in his dialogues with Dora, when he comes to life and enlists our sympathies. But the moments are fitful. Ivan's very qualities—his boyish exuberance, his soaring idealism, his absolute disinterestedness—deprive him of human ballast. This sense of abstraction is heightened by the facile and inflated language which Camus too frequently puts into his mouth. Kaliayev is, in literal fact, too good to be true.

Revolt, the negation of the unjust law, has almost mystical force in Camus' vocabulary. The man who can write (in *L'Etat de siège*): "O sainte révolte, refus vivant, honneur du peuple" gives a peculiarly privileged role to rebels and yet, they are rarely vital or actual and the fate of most of them confirms their essentially abstract and exemplary character. It is significant that they achieve their revolt, if only temporarily, by the sacrifice of their immediate happiness or of their lives. Caligula provokes his own death under the knives of the patrician conspirators and thereby announces the bankruptcy of "total" revolt. The plague prevents Dr. Rieux from visiting his invalid wife who dies in a nursing home while they are still separated.

A lesser figure in the ranks of revolt is Rambert, a journalist from Paris "covering" Arab social conditions in Oran. Faithful to his cult of happiness and to his belief in the value of personal relationships, he uses all his energies to effect an escape from the plague-ridden town and rejoin his mistress, but he abandons his plan at the very moment it becomes possible, so as to throw in his lot with Dr. Rieux. Along with Rambert we may count Tarrou, the smiling apologist of the *joie de vivre* and enthusiast for Spanish dancing, whose protest against the arbitrary is centred on an inflexible opposition to capital punishment.

After assisting Rieux unscathed for long months, he succumbs to the epidemic when its force is waning. Diégo chooses to die so as to free his fiancée from the grip of the Plague. Ivan Kaliayev sacrifices his life in protecting his comrades, while Dora is clearly bent on following his example. It is impossible not to feel an element of despair in all this. The relevance and possible influence of Camus' ideas hinge on the frank recognition that he demands dedicated and almost saintly men (if we may hazard the term in a lay context) in order to vindicate his principles. Further, he demands that their self-abnegation extend to forfeiting their lives. The modesty of Rieux's statements of faith in *La Peste* conceal the exacting truth: that Camus requires heroes and that his rebels are in fact heroic. Even Caligula's career is not without a certain perverted heroism.

To the rebels who are, for the most part, characterized by selflessness and respect for the human person, Camus opposes, in a sort of dialectical counterpoint, a series of nihilists and conformists. The first of these types we may call the *moral desperadoes* (to borrow Matthew Arnold's term for Carlyle). The enigmatic figure of Cottard in *La Peste* is one of these. His role in the novel begins and ends with violence. We are first introduced to him after his abortive attempt at suicide by hanging. He is a small, rotund, ill-favoured man given to sudden fits of fury. There is much about him of the man-on-the-run, and he lives in perpetual fear of the police and the apparatus of justice. Prior to his attempt at suicide (which inevitably attracts a police-investigation), he impresses his neighbour, Grand, as taciturn and secretive, with a marked taste for gangster films. Subsequently, he becomes talkative and gregarious, an ostentatiously sympathetic listener who is more than indulgent of his neighbours' shortcomings. Grand thinks these manœuvres a tortuous attempt to win local confidence and sympathy. Before his abortive suicide, Cottard is bitter against the rich and the well connected but, afterwards, he becomes flagrantly orthodox in his political opinions, cultivating solid, bourgeois acquaintances. From time to time, he reveals something of his hatred and contempt for normal society. Hence, in the early days of the epidemic, he treats Rieux to an angry outburst in which he mocks the public's panic over a few deaths and invokes destruction on them. The world needs to be changed; it needs "Un tremblement de terre. Un vrai!"

As the plague worsens, Cottard seems to welcome the chaos it brings and to witness the wretched fate of Oran's inhabitants with ill-concealed glee. He is engaged in smuggling alcohol and cigarettes and is responsible for introducing Rambert to the organization which ar-

ranges escapes from the sealed town. He is, in fact, a beneficiary of the plague, a profiteer in human suffering. He refuses to join Rieux's sanitary squad because he is convinced that the efforts of men cannot prevail against the plague. He has no faith in the moral resources of men and becomes the accomplice of the plague because it is the great leveller, imposing a common pattern of needs and fears on all conditions of men. Having lived in terror of arrest for some obscure past crime, Cottard rejoices to see the righteous live in terror of infection. He greets the decline of the epidemic with consternation, hoping against hope for a new outbreak, for the re-establishment of the rule of the arbitrary. Tarrou rightly discerns that Cottard's crime is to have deliberately approved in his heart of the death of his fellows. When the state of plague is officially ended, Cottard fires from his rooms at the dancers celebrating in the streets below. The police take him by assault and he is led brutally away in the presence of Dr. Rieux. Cottard seems to embody the principle of total negation and sterile contempt. He is completely alone, rejecting the claims of human solidarity.

Nada, the licensed fool of Cadiz, in the play, *L'Etat de siège*, similarly expresses a destructive nihilism: "Dieu nie l'homme et moi, je nie Dieu." He welcomes the Plague, admiring the way in which it elaborates upon the natural senselessness of the world with a terrifying logic of its own. Like Cottard, Nada—the very name is a pun on the Spanish word for "nothingness"—detests his fellows for not allowing the absurd its full weight and taking the full consequences of its existence. He becomes the willing accomplice and beneficiary of the Plague when he accepts a post in its lunatic bureaucracy. Nada is in revolt, but it is a revolt drained of moral content. It is significant that, in the play's concluding scene, Nada is swallowed up in the angry waves of that same sea which Camus so frequently invokes as the symbol of liberty.

In *Les Justes* Stepan represents a variation on this type. It is true that, in the political sense, he rebels against existing society but he has lost sight of the larger aims of the revolution in his pursuit of destructive action. He is the victim of an abstract and terrifying idealism that will not stop to count the human cost. The key to his fury is to be found in the brutal and humiliating whipping he once experienced in prison. He acts out of this sense of humiliation and will recognize no limits in his fight for the revolutionary cause. Acts of destruction and violence alone seem to have validity for him. Engaged in the liberation of Man, he denies individual men. Stepan again is not explored in any depth; he is simply the galvanic type of professional revolutionary.

Camus' rebels combat the absurd order of the world because it menaces them in their very nature as men, while his moral desperadoes capitulate to the absurd out of their despair of men. In either event, both types pay homage to the reality and efficacity of the absurd. On the other hand, it is in the nature of Camus' last group of character-types either to ignore the central absurdity of life or to reconcile men to it. These we may conveniently refer to as the *conformists* since they support the prevailing forms of religion and authority.

In depicting them, Camus, exercising a minor but genuine satirical talent which often shades into witty caricature, moves a little away from his chilling abstractions. For example, he sketches in a number of satirically observed figure-heads of authority. The most accomplished, the most felt of these sketches is the character of M. Othon, the examining magistrate in *La Peste*. At first, his bourgeois pomposity and gentility are treated with marked irony. He is caricatured as a self-important *père de famille* in Tarrou's witty account of the daily "parade" of the Othon family in an Oranais restaurant. He is compared to an undertaker and a well-bred owl, while the night-porter at Tarrou's hotel suggests, with macabre malice, that M. Othon is prematurely, but aptly, dressed for laying out. There is something inflexible and self-righteous about this cold and distant judge, but he gains in stature as the novel proceeds and, when his only son dies from the plague, he emerges as a figure of genuine pathos and dignity. His bereavement prompts him to volunteer for service against the plague and this change of heart represents a significant shift in loyalties away from a narrow and complacent legalism to a deliberate identification of himself with the "defeated and humiliated."

Especially ironical is Camus' treatment of the lawyers who are engaged in Mersault's trial. Their theatrical gestures and tricks of oratory are caught with sardonic precision and achieve, under Mersault's oddly objective eye, a rather monstrous irrelevance. In the same way, another judge (Victoria's father in *L'Etat de siège*) is portrayed as a harsh legal opportunist, quite indifferent to the content of the law but always ready to support and execute it, while sheltering behind a mechanical and punitive religious faith. Skouratov, the police-chief in *Les Justes*, represents a more subtle and complex embodiment of authority and is memorable as the willing and intelligent tool of an oppressive system. Much of Camus' horror of capital punishment enters into his descriptions of the legal world. It seems to him almost obscene that men who, in other ways, may be intelligent and admirable enough, are prepared to decree the death of members of society. This paradox is vividly illustrated for Tarrou by the conduct of his

own father, an attorney general who combines paternal virtues and an expert knowledge of railway time-tables with the professional duty of demanding the death penalty.

To the same family of *conformists* belong Camus' representatives of orthodox religious faith. With the possible exception of Father Paneloux, the Jesuit priest in *La Peste*, they are all observed with a degree of irony that verges on the hostile. Everything in Camus' personal development prepares us for this attitude: his early poverty, the paganism which was one of the vital lessons he learned from his experience of nature in Algeria and, finally, the political ambience of his young manhood. It is significant that Camus' first theatrical venture was to participate in writing a co-operative play—*Révolte dans les Asturies*, banned in performance but published in 1936—which was inspired by an abortive rising of Spanish miners at Oviedo in 1934. The repression of this rising and the later events of the Civil War, taken together with the fact that his mother was Spanish, naturally made Spain especially interesting to Camus. The course of politics there, by identifying Christianity with the Roman Catholic Church, seemed to confirm Camus' pagan intuitions and fostered in him a profound antagonism to the unjust and oppressive character of organized religion.

When the Catholic philosopher, Gabriel Marcel, upbraided Camus for setting his allegory, *L'Etat de siège*, in Spain, he retaliated in the sharpest fashion, defending his choice on the grounds that the success of Franco's arms—tragically significant for the subsequent course of European history—owed much to the support of a church whose faith could envisage, with no apparent sense of contradiction, the employment of Moorish troops to protect Christian ideals.[3] This, of course, verges on political polemics but Camus' rejection of Christianity does not depend on incidentals; it lies at the very centre of his experience of life: ". . . je crois avoir une juste idée de la grandeur du christianisme, mais nous sommes quelques-uns dans ce monde persécuté à avoir le sentiment que si le Christ est mort pour certains, il ne'est pas mort pour nous. . . ."[4]

In the light of these facts, Camus' irony against the Church is scarcely surprising. In *Lettres à un ami allemand* (1945) Camus paints a contemptuous sketch—it is no more—of a German army chaplain who gives religious consolation to a boy bound for execution, only to rouse the unsuspecting guards when the boy makes a bid for escape from a moving vehicle. Camus stigmatizes this "man of God"

[3]Albert Camus, "Pourquoi l'Espagne," reprinted in *Actuelles*, 241–50.
[4]*Actuelles*, 74 (reprinted from *Combat*, 11 janvier 1945).

because he fails in his vocation: "Une seconde où l'homme de Dieu doit décider s'il est avec les bourreaux ou avec les martyres, selon sa vocation." Camus' treatment of the prison chaplain who visits Mersault in the condemned cell is more obliquely ironical. He portrays him as sympathetic but limited, sincere but fundamentally in the wrong because, for all his errands of mercy, he consents to the taking of life, to legal murder. No clear personality emerges from the dramatic late encounter which takes place between Mersault and this chaplain. One perceives a shadowy, puzzled, and conventional priest at grips with a pagan convinced of his victimhood. The encounter has symbolical force and is "rigged" so as to emphasize the feebleness of the Christian promise of eternal life after repentance.

More real is the figure of the examining magistrate who is charged with the preliminary questioning of Mersault. Camus' picture of this official never entirely lacks sympathy but, as Mersault's interrogation proceeds and the magistrate's religious ardour becomes more evident, Camus' tone grows increasingly ironical. The deft insertion of a small and ostensibly gratuitous detail emphasizes this irony. For example, when the magistrate's appeal to repentance is at its most intense, Mersault is shown as bothered by the large flies that settle on his face. The examining magistrate is portrayed wholly from the outside, in his gestures and involuntary grimaces. The complex personality that lies behind the emotional appeals of this humane and ardent Catholic, anxious to save a lost soul, remains hidden. He appears to the reader (and Camus clearly intends it) as a bundle of eccentricities. We observe the mouthing, the gesticulating, the brandishing of the crucifix, but glimpse little of the animating spirit.

In *L'Etat de siège* religion is represented by two figures: first, a fugitive priest abandoning the plague-ridden city ("Chrétiens d'Espagne, vous êtes abandonnés") and second, that twisted and self-righteous judge, Victoria's father. Both are passing silhouettes; both mirror the failure of religious faith at a testing moment. In *Les Justes*, the claims of religion are made by the Grand Duchess in her interview with the imprisoned Ivan Kaliayev. In her, the note of human loss and suffering sounds authentic. Nor are her appeals to Ivan to repent treated with the same irony that Camus employs elsewhere. Her criticisms of Ivan's abstract idealism are telling ("Tous les hommes prennent le même ton pour parler de la justice"), but her lack of commitment to the life of this world robs her of human substance.

The only full-scale figure to represent Christianity is Father Paneloux. The others are sketches but Camus explores Paneloux with a juster appreciation of the complexity and hazards of religious belief.

Whereas his other orthodox believers are essentially mediocre, in Father Paneloux Camus creates a Christian priest whose stature is not unworthy of those metaphysical rebels whose entire experience contradicts Christian resignation. Paneloux preaches two sermons during the plague. The first begins uncompromisingly ("Mes frères, vous êtes dans le malheur, mes frères, vous l'avez mérité") and seeks to turn the repentant sinner to God. God has sent the plague as a punishment but, at its very heart, there lies the road to salvation, for God is never closer at hand than in the moment of trial. In the period that elapses between his first and second sermons Paneloux gains concrete experience of the horrors of the epidemic. All his experiences are subsumed in one poignant and symbolic case—the death of M. Othon's young son. Paneloux, in company with Dr. Rieux and others, witnesses the boy's agony. There can be no doubt about Camus' interpretation of the death: it is crystallized in one terrible image when, after a particularly agonizing spasm, the boy's body lies outstretched on the narrow hospital bed in the posture of crucifixion. The boy dies, and later, in the hospital courtyard, Rieux's angry pity cannot be checked: ". . . je refuserai jusqu'à la mort d'aimer cette création où des enfants sont torturés."

Paneloux's second sermon bears the imprint of his recent experience. It lacks the challenging, almost triumphant, note of the first and attempts painfully to meet and resolve the paradox of innocent suffering. Paneloux's conclusions are substantially of the order "Credo quia impossibile." Man must accept all or reject all and where is the man strong enough to bear the consequences of total rejection? Hence, it is necessary to love God in the heart of terror and in the face of the innocent dead. It is necessary to accept what defies human understanding. Shortly afterwards, Paneloux succumbs to a fever, adamantly refuses to allow his landlady to fetch a doctor and persists in his refusal until his condition is critical. Then, in deference to the regulations for isolating suspected plague-victims, he agrees to enter hospital. His condition deteriorates steadily and he dies clasping the crucifix. Paneloux dies faithful to his creed that "Il faut tout croire ou tout nier." He accepts all, for he considers this the only way of reconciling the apparent contradictions in God's order. His death is a gesture of desperate affirmation. Vital and impassioned issues are involved in Paneloux's sermons and his death, yet he never comes alive as a man. He has neither light nor shadow, only a constant transparency through which are refracted certain aspects of Catholic belief.

Albert Camus' real claim to our attention is as an imaginative writer passionately concerned with ideas and not as a "thinker." In his

philosophical interests he is symptomatic rather than significant, lacking the power and originality of, say, André Malraux or Jean-Paul Sartre, to whom he bears a general resemblance. As an imaginative writer, he fails to realize his characters in depth. The process of character-making is wholly subordinated to the need of representing ideas. It is true that these characters often display a certain impressiveness in the exemplary role which their creator assigns to them, but they eminently lack substance and the "true voice of feeling." The paradox and unresolved contradiction at the core of Camus' work is that it embodies the protest against doctrinaire and inhuman abstraction in lifeless and abstract characters. Everything in the development of Camus' ideas suggests that he shares Pascal's opinion: "Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point." Yet, in his actual creation of characters, the heart goes down before the intellect and the senses. Camus' tragic vision of an absurd world, impressively configured in the recurring symbolism of imprisonment, is, as a collective effect, difficult to better. Yet the individual characters are swallowed up in this universal myth and rarely attain any sense of living actuality. Camus has attempted to answer this criticism: "La princesse de Clèves a-t-elle un visage? Antigone? Phèdre? etc. . . . On s'imagine voir les visages à partir du XIX[e] siècle, on les voit en réalité de façons si diverses que tout illustrateur est voué à décevoir le lecteur. La décadence commence avec l'expression psychologique. Le vrai critérium est ailleurs: ces personnages s'oublient-ils? Mais ce serait à développer."[5] As a reply, this is adroit and not lacking in cogency, but, if we apply Camus' "true test" to his own fiction, can we resist the conclusion that, with the certain exception of Grand and the possible exception of Rieux, his major characters do, in fact, fail to lodge in the memory? They inhabit the rarefied world of types and are lost in the idea they represent. Camus is, however, more successful in his minor characters. It is true that many of these also exist as mere notations of ideas. From time to time, however, they pass beyond this level and, though observed only briefly and satirically, come to life—there is nothing like eccentricity to give the illusion of life—and suggest a complexity, a warmth, and an individuality which are rare in Camus' fiction.

[5]Unpublished letter to Pierre de Boisdeffre, quoted in Boisdeffre: "Albert Camus ou l'expérience tragique," in *Métamorphose de la littérature: De Proust à Sartre* (nouvelle édition remaniée et mise à jour, Paris, 1952), 303, n. 43.

THE DOMESTICITY OF T. S. ELIOT

David W. Evans

I suppose there must be a double boiler:
Isn't there one in every kitchen?
—The Cocktail Party

IT may be that T. S. Eliot will never be looked upon as a household poet, one of the elderly bearded gentlemen whose poetry is regarded with affection because it is reassuring and uncomplicated. But Mr. Eliot, nevertheless, is the most domestic of modern poets. His domesticity, indeed, as much as any single factor, distinguishes him significantly from the Romantics who began to forsake the town for "the pleasures of the pathless woods" not long after William Cowper wrote his eulogy to the sofa. For a hundred years after that, furniture ceased to play an imposing role in poetry. It was unpoetic. While he continued to describe with Wordsworthian sensitivity what used to be called the beauties of nature, Eliot changed all this. He brought poetry back to the town, (which had by then become the city), to the houses in the town, and to the furniture in the houses. Enamoured of houses, especially old houses, he made himself unconsciously the publicist *par excellence* for the handiwork of the architect and the building contractor, the carpenter, the plumber, and the interior decorator. And, looking out from the barred gate of heaven, old Mr. Cowper could be assured that so long as Eliot wrote, "no want of timber" need be "felt or fear'd in Albion's happy isle."

Eliot contributed, of course, to the construction of the Church in *The Rock*, but the lumber in his other poetry is even more impressive. Count, for instance, the corridors in his verse, including those of history. Count the passage-ways and all the little doors. No room in the house has been slighted: the cellar in "The Hollow Men," the kitchen in the "Preludes," the drawing-room in "A Cooking Egg," the dining-room in "Aunt Helen," the hall of "Gerontion" in which Fräulein von Kulp turns with her hand upon the door. To be sure, the cellar is infested with rats and strewn with broken glass, an unpleasant place, but clematis or vine leaves come straying in over every lintel. Children are singing in the cupola, and leading to those upper reaches, to the bedrooms and the baths, are innumerable stairways, the many turnings of which are relieved, now and then, by the view from a medieval window, which is "bellied like the fig's fruit."

Aware, no doubt, that he once objected to Milton's "celestial and infernal regions" as "large but insufficiently furnished apartments filled by heavy conversation," Eliot has made sure that a similar criticism shall not be directed at his own poetry. His interiors are crammed with furniture, and they are not merely glimpsed; they are revealed in graphic detail. A great deal, for instance, can be surmised about a room in which *Views of the Oxford Colleges* rests on the table with the knitting, which contains a screen, that admirable mid-Victorian atrocity; a room upon whose mantelpiece, cluttered with bric-à-brac, are daguerreotypes and silhouettes of ancient relatives; and a room which contains above the mantel, framed presumably in heavy gilt, an "Invitation to the Dance." If decorum occasionally breaks down and the footman takes to sitting on the table with the second housemaid on his knee, there remains the comforting assurance that the dining service is suitably opulent, its trays adorned with running stags. The library, appropriately, has its window seat and its set of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and the mantel there, its Dresden clock.

Plumbing, of course, presents a problem. To counteract the smell in the drains, the occupants have done what they can; but, even when insured against defective plumbing, they are plagued by the nuisance of bad wiring and worse ventilation. In the boudoir, adjoining the lacqueria, the light of the seven-branched candelabra and of the sea-wood fire fed with copper, glinting on jewels and cosmetic jars, creates an aura of luxuriant, if somewhat Gothic, splendour. But the fireplace, as in so many of these old houses, smokes badly. The gloom of candlelight, moreover, is a necessary evil. Some of the ladies, of course, conscious of their age, may even prefer it. "Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead" have a certain romantic appeal, but surely Madame de Tornquist, groping about with candles in a darkened room, can only have been searching for the fuse box.

Eliot's repetitive use of symbols such as the wheel and the point, the rose and the yew, often cited as contributing to the unity of his work, began, it seems, with the humbler furniture of his poetry. Long before he became a dramatist, he was a designer of sets and a property man. Much of his earlier poetry was evoked through description of setting alone, and, like all good property men, he believed in using the same prop again and again if it served a purpose. The Eliot interior, in which his protagonists live amid stifling elegance in soul-destroying Victorian bad taste, is a set piece. It is, however, not the only Eliot interior. In Eliot's poetry there are two modes of life, and the alternative to living in stuffy luxury is to live in sordid squalor.

In a flat, in a one-night cheap hotel, or in any one of a thousand furnished rooms with dingy shades, this is how the other half of Eliot's people live. Whether it is in Gerontion's pension, or Mrs. Turner's house of ill repute, it is always much the same room, one which can serve for the seduction of a typist, for an epileptic's vision of Sweeney shaving, or for the thoughts of an old man being read to by a boy. As a set piece, admittedly, it does small credit to the building-trades.

At the head of a stair in a house which is patched and peeling, the room is furnished with a bed and little else. The bed may serve as a couch by day. It may be infested with fleas, although the occupants of the room, strangely enough, are imbued with the liveliest sense of cleanliness. If they are not caught in the act of shaving, or of washing their feet, they are seen emerging "towelled from the bath." The tooth-brush hangs on the wall, and the washing hangs from the window. Apart from this, meals, eaten from tins, are of small importance. Much time is spent in bed but not necessarily in sleep. The men are troubled with nightmares, while the women lie sleepless, counting the hours,

> trying to unweave, unwind, unravel
> And piece together the past and the future,

while the groaner wails in the darkness without.

Where domesticity appears most bleak and cheerless, where it borders on the nightmare, as in the wretched flat in *Sweeney Agonistes*, is in the early poetry, the poetry of disillusion. In Eliot's later work, the concept of domesticity changes. Home becomes less like a fragment with which to shore against one's ruin and more like the cornerstone of the social structure. He clothes the idea with something of its ancient and traditional meaning and endows it, finally, with religious overtones. In *The Cocktail Party*, for instance, the chorus offers "the words for the building of the hearth." The hearth is to be built "under the protection of the stars" with "a chair each side of it," and the libation ends with a plea:

> May the holy ones watch over the roof,
> May the Moon herself influence the bed.

The focal point of Eliot's interest in the urban scene, then, is the home. "Home is where one starts from," and in Eliot's world, we live and die, in a temporal sense, in houses: not on the battlefield. And houses, like us, have a life of their own. The idea is hinted at in "Burnt Norton," which to some critics did not seem much like a poem about a house. To be sure, the house in "Burnt Norton" remains a shadow in the background; the home, "our first world," is barely suggested.

It is the garden which commands the attention, the garden which is described with meticulous realism, its roses laid out in formal patterns, its pool of concrete within the box circle brown and corroded except when the sun fills it with the illusion of water out of light. Of the house, nothing is known from this poem, except that it has a door which leads into the garden.

The old manor-house in Gloucestershire, near which he once visited and from which he took the name Burnt Norton, apparently haunted Eliot's imagination, none the less. When he had finished the first Quartet, he did not begin the second, "East Coker." He wrote a play, *The Family Reunion*, a play which centred in and was developed around just such an old house as the one in Gloucestershire. He called it Wishwood, but it was really Burnt Norton, the archetype of all old houses, "whether in Argos or England." Amy, the dowager owner of Wishwood, is not one of Eliot's favoured people. She cannot see the transitory nature of things. She fails to realize what Eliot has said in another context, that "dust inbreathed was a house." For her, Wishwood is life. It is she who has striven through the years to hold the place together, while she waited for the favourite son to return and "take command." When this eight-years' dream proves false, the intensity of her feeling is shattering. She speaks in terms of the bitter and homely realities:

> So you will all leave me!
> An old woman alone in a damned house.
> I will let the walls crumble. Why should I worry
> To keep the tiles on the roof, combat the endless weather,
> Resist the wind? fight with increasing taxes
> And unpaid rents and tithes? nourish investments
> With wakeful nights and patient calculations
> With the solicitor, the broker, agent? Why should I?
> It is no concern of the body in the tomb
> To bother about the upkeep. Let the wind and rain do that.

Wishwood is, as it happens, a relatively minor element in the overall design of *The Family Reunion*. It has little to do with the basic theme of the play, since any fixed environment would have served Eliot's apparent purpose—to provide a prison from which his hero, Harry, Lord Monchensey, must escape to the uncertain search for an ineffable salvation. Wishwood, nevertheless, is an entity. Eliot has developed his dialogue with such subtlety that the spectator is not allowed to forget for one moment the presence of the old house. It is through Amy, of course, who has forced herself to fulfil its purposes, that Wishwood is chiefly personified, but its personality vibrates throughout the play. Even the chorus, the traditionally detached

observer, is affected. Dwelling on the activities which contribute to life in the house, "the agony in the curtained bedroom . . . the singing in the kitchen . . . the steps at night in the corridor," the chorus begins:

> In an old house there is always listening, and more is heard than is spoken.
> And what is spoken remains in the room, waiting for the future to hear it.

The climactic scene in *The Family Reunion* takes place between Agatha, Amy's sister who is endowed with a kind of second sight, and Harry, the son who is pursued by furies. It is conducted in the "world not world but that which is not world" atmosphere familiar in Eliot, but, more important, it echoes unmistakably the whole setting of "Burnt Norton," recalling once again the footsteps in the corridor, the moment in the rose-garden, and reminding the spectator that

> What might have been and what has been
> Point to one end, which is always present.

Agatha turns to Harry and murmurs:

> I only looked through the little door
> When the sun was shining on the rose-garden:
> And heard in the distance tiny voices. . . .

The voices, "treble voices on the lawn" at Wishwood, are the voices of children "hidden in the foliage" at Burnt Norton, "hidden excitedly, containing laughter." And presently, Harry answers Agatha:

> I was not there, you were not there, only our phantasms
> And what did not happen is as true as what did happen
> O my dear, and you walked through the little door
> And I ran to meet you in the rose-garden.

The resemblance between this passage in *The Family Reunion* and "Burnt Norton" has often been remarked but seldom questioned. No poet, however, is more exacting in the use of words than Eliot, and this moment recalled in perhaps the most vital and important scene of the play cannot have been mere happenstance. It links the play and the poem too obviously and too securely, but the only factual relationship between play and poem lies in the presence of the old house from which both seem to have evolved.

When Eliot had completed *The Family Reunion*, he returned to the Quartets. He wrote "East Coker," and sensitive to the value of transitions he made the opening passage not only an introduction to the second Quartet but a transition from the first. In a sense this passage serves as a sort of valedictory to Wishwood as "Burnt Norton"

serves as a prelude to the play. It summarizes Eliot's special feeling toward old houses in general and lends an added significance to his choice of a title for the first Quartet.

> In succession
> Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended,
> Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place
> Is an open field . . .

and, also:

> Houses live and die: there is a time for building
> And a time for living and for generation
> And a time for the wind to break the loosened pane
> And to shake the wainscot where the field-mouse trots
> And to shake the tattered arras woven with a silent motto.

Behind the sparse economy of the lines, as always in Eliot's poetry, rise shapes and shadows, the "tenants of the house," an old man, perhaps, with "eighty years and no to-morrow," or a woman, between the arras, twisting lilac in her hands. The tenants are not less important than the house.

More so than the household poets, then, Eliot is at home with homeliness. To regard him as a mystic who cuts himself off from all traffic with the world is woefully misleading. His poetry retains its simplicity, a simplicity rooted in realism, even when the implications of its symbolism are overwhelming. His search for the still point, for the intersection of time with the timeless, begins of necessity with the realities. His verse, far more than is generally acknowledged, springs from the commonplace, and his vision is wide enough to encompass the tangibles of this world as well as "the light that never was on land or sea."

SOME PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION*

T. A. GOUDGE

IT will soon be a century since the period of immense intellectual ferment which followed the publication of *The Origin of Species*. Everyone knows what a profound effect this work had not only on biology, but also on the social sciences, the humanities, and even on theology. Since 1859, "evolution" has been one of the most overworked words in the English language. It has been used (and abused) on divers occasions to apply to almost every sort of entity, from the elementary particles of matter up to and including God. Philosophy, like other disciplines, has been profoundly affected by it, as may be seen in the work of such men as Spencer, Nietzsche, Bergson, Peirce, Dewey, Mead, and Whitehead. The evolutionary doctrines which these philosophers espoused took for granted the Darwinian position, and represented a speculative extension, a modification, or a hostile criticism of its basic tenets. Meanwhile, within the context of biology, the theory of evolution itself continued to evolve, so that today, after nearly a century, it differs in important respects from the theory propounded by Darwin. New developments have "emerged," and it is therefore appropriate that philosophers should try to come abreast of them and assess their philosophical significance.

In the present paper, I propose to deal with one or two questions that have arisen as a result of these new developments. I shall begin by giving a brief account of the Darwinian theory in its original form. Then I shall outline certain respects in which it has been modified during the past fifty years. Here I will undertake to report on recent developments in evolutionary biology.[1] Finally, I shall deal with two questions of a broadly philosophical kind: (1) To what extent, if any, does present-day evolutionary theory require the idea of "competition" or the "struggle for existence" which loomed so large in nineteenth-century thinking about the subject? and (2) To what extent, if any, does existing biological knowledge entitle us to say that the evolution-

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[1]For information on these developments, I am particularly indebted to the following works: G. S. Carter, *Animal Evolution: A Study of Recent Views of Its Causes* (London, 1951); Th. Dobzhansky, *Genetics and the Origin of Species* (3rd ed., revised, New York, 1951); Julian Huxley, *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis* (London, 1942); and G. G. Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution* (New York, 1949).

ary process as a whole has a "direction" and hence is not altogether "random"? The consideration of these questions will oblige us to distinguish issues which are of a factual nature, decidable on observational grounds, from issues which are either matters of interpretation or else are linguistic and verbal. I shall try to show *inter alia* that many misunderstandings have had their origin in a failure to make these distinctions explicit.

I

At the outset it will be well to remind ourselves that the theory of evolution is not a simple doctrine which can be formulated in a few sentences. Like most fundamental scientific theories it has a complex structure, and is continually being modified in its details. One can, however, distinguish two parts within the theory. The first part seeks to describe the actual history of living things on the earth. This descriptive task is undertaken in the main by palaeontology and palaeobotany, and utilizes the evidence of fossils. The findings of these sciences permit the drawing of certain conclusions as to the course which evolution has in fact followed. The second part of the theory seeks to give a causal explanation of the evolutionary process, utilizing for this purpose evidence drawn from the contemporary study of living things plus various hypotheses of a relevant sort. With regard to evolution as a historical process, it is supported by such a vast array of considerations that no informed and reasonable person is likely to doubt that it has occurred. With regard to the causal explanation of this process, however, there is much that remains conjectural and the subject of legitimate disagreement. Both these aspects of the theory, the historical and the causal, were brought together in an impressive manner by Charles Darwin in *The Origin of Species*.

By the time this work appeared, most scientific men were becoming convinced of the truth of certain conclusions about the plants and animals on the earth. Geological investigation of the temporal order of different strata of rock on the surface of the globe, together with the discovery of fossil remains of organisms in those strata, made it fairly certain that there had been a succession of living forms on the earth for an immensely long period of time. Hence, it was concluded, all organisms now living must have descended from other organisms, often very different in character, which lived in the remote past. Furthermore, the record seemed to show that many of the differences involved had arisen gradually through the ages, so that if all the individuals which had ever existed could be assembled, a broadly continuous array of forms would be found. Thus the old, sharp lines of

demarcation between species were becoming blurred in the face of the evidence that living things had in the course of their history changed their form as a result of a gradual, continuous process. To discover or infer the exact details of that process and so to compile a complete natural history, was considered by the majority of evolutionists before Darwin to be their central task.

Darwin was one of the few people to see the importance of the causal as well as the historical aspect of evolution. While the two aspects are sometimes intertwined with one another in his writing, he held that his primary objective was to formulate a scientifically acceptable account of the factors which had caused the successive changes disclosed by natural history. Reduced to bare essentials, the account he gave amounts to the following.[2]

It is an observed fact that all organisms have a tendency to produce offspring which in the early stages of their existence are far more numerous than their parents. Consequently, every type of organism tends to increase at a rate approximating to a geometric progession. Yet it is also an observed fact that there is an approximate constancy in the numbers of a given type of organism over prolonged stretches of time; and even when its numbers are increasing, the rate of increase falls far short of any geometric progression. From these two facts, Darwin inferred that a process, to which he gave the name "the struggle for existence," must be at work. That is to say, he inferred that among the young of every type of organism, "competition" occurs, so that many of them die before reaching maturity. Among those which do mature, there is a further struggle in reproductive activity, so that only some adult organisms of each generation leave offspring, the actual numbers differing from case to case. Darwin seems thus to have used the expressions "competition" and "struggle for existence" as synonyms. At one point, it is true, he says that the term "struggle for existence" is to be understood in "a large and metaphorical sense";[3] yet it is by no means clear that he always adhered to his own intention in this matter. Certainly, many of his interpreters, including T. H. Huxley, regarded the "struggle for existence" as far from being a metaphor. The implications of this will concern us at a later stage in the discussion.

The third observed fact utilized by Darwin was the occurrence of numerous variations in the characteristics possessed by the members of each species. From this fact, together with the struggle for existence

[2]Cf. Julian Huxley, *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis*, 14–17.
[3]C. Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, reprinted from the 6th edition in The World's Classics (London, 1951), 64.

already established, he made a further inference, namely, that the variations which assist individuals to survive and reproduce will tend to be preserved in the species, while variations unfavourable to survival and reproduction will gradually be eliminated. To this process he gave the name "natural selection"—another metaphor, incidentally, but one which was often construed both by himself and by others in a completely literal sense. Since many variations are undoubtedly transmitted from parents to offspring, natural selection will produce, he contended, a slow accumulation of favourable variations in a species from generation to generation. Accordingly, a species possessing such variations will tend to become better and better adapted to a given way of life, or will shift gradually from one way of life to another. In either case, changes will take place in the observable features of the members of the species in successive generations, so that ultimately a "new" species will be produced. Natural selection is, therefore, Darwin concluded, the main cause of the origin of species and of the historical course taken by the evolution of living things on the earth.[4]

Darwin's causal account of the evolutionary process is thus made up of three observed facts and two inferences, the second of which makes use of the first inference as one of its premisses. Concerning the facts there seems to be little dispute. But concerning the inferences—which, it may be pointed out, are not ordinary deductions—disagreement may arise, especially with regard to the linguistic form in which the conclusions are stated. Darwin's language at this point was profoundly affected by his reading of Malthus' *Essay on Population*, from which, in October, 1838, he derived the initial stimulus for his theory. Hence, *The Origin of Species* reflects the influence of the Malthusian terminology, and this gave the presentation of the book's ideas a verbal form which was not always advantageous to them. Both scientific and popular misunderstandings were thereby encouraged. Darwin himself was fully aware of the influence at work here. He even describes his theory of natural selection as "the doctrine of Malthus applied with manifold force to the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms."[5]

A general consequence of *The Origin of Species*, which excited great controversy both within biology and outside it, was that the evolutionary process as a whole appeared completely fortuitous. For Darwin, the historical sequence of organic forms was an accidental sequence, resulting from the random interaction of chance variations,

[4] *Ibid.*, 134–7.
[5] *Ibid.*, 65.

the struggle for existence, and natural selection. Hence, not only was the idea of teleology excluded from the account of how living things had developed on the earth, but it was implied that the total process just happened to take place as it did. "I believe in no law of necessary development," Darwin is said to have declared.[6] The exclusion of teleology excited the profound opposition of those who believed there was "design in Nature." On the other hand, the view that the total course of evolution was fortuitous excited the opposition of those who believed in the "universal reign of scientific law."

The difficulties inherent in this consequence of the Darwinian doctrine grew more and more acute as paleontologists assembled their fossils in orderly series, and it became clear that the changes exemplified in these series were by no means random. On the contrary, a definite direction or orientation in the changes could often be discerned. Hence, by the end of the nineteenth century, many paleontologists had ceased to employ the concept of natural selection, or had relegated it to a minor role, and subscribed to some type of "orthogenesis" as an explanation of the long-term trends manifested by phylogenetic arrays.[7] To what extent we are entitled at present to speak of a "direction" in evolution is a matter which will be taken up towards the close of the paper.

There can be no doubt that the major limitation in Darwin's theory was due to his lack of knowledge concerning the factors and forces of heredity. This limitation is apparent in his view of variations and their role in the evolutionary process. Thus he believed that some variations due to the direct action of the environment on the organism are transmitted from parents to offspring; and that other variations due to the individual's use or disuse of different organs and functions during its lifetime are also transmitted. The great majority of variations, however, are those which arise in an apparently spontaneous manner. While they do presumably have causes, we remain in the dark as to what these causes are or how they operate. Such variations are "random" in the sense that they are not correlated with the particular adaptive needs of the individual organism in which they arise. Darwin also held that variations must occur "in every direction" with each generation of a species. Finally, some cause or causes must be

[6]Quoted in E. Nordenskiöld, *The History of Biology* (New York, 1929), 470. Cf. *The Origin of Species*, 219–20: "The fact of little or no modification having been effected since the glacial period would have been of some avail against those who believe in an innate and necessary law of development, but is powerless against the doctrine of natural selection or the survival of the fittest, which implies that when variations or individual differences *happen to arise, these will be preserved*" (italics mine).

[7]Cf. G. L. Jepson, "Selection, Orthogenesis and the Fossil Record," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, XCIII, 1949, 489–96.

supposed constantly at work retaining inherited variations within a species, though here again we do not know the manner of its operation. Darwin quite frankly admitted his perplexity about these matters. Thus, in a letter to Huxley, on November 25, 1859, he wrote: "If, as I must think, external conditions produce little *direct* effect, what the devil determines each particular variation?"[8]

II

The knowledge which Darwin and his contemporaries lacked has been largely provided in the present century by the science of genetics. As a result, a new turn has been taken in the understanding of the evolutionary process through a synthesis of genetical principles with an enlarged doctrine of natural selection. The men chiefly responsible for bringing about this synthesis are Fisher, Haldane, and Julian Huxley in England, and Dobzhansky, Muller, Simpson, and Wright in the United States.[9] I shall now attempt to outline a few features of their approach which seem to me of philosophical interest.

The first point of importance is that we now have excellent grounds for believing that every observable characteristic and every observable function of each individual organism is controlled by a determinate genetic constitution which the organism has inherited from its ancestors. The genetic constitution or *genotype* is held to be a system of discrete units (chromosomes and genes) which have a high degree of stability, and are transmitted in various combinations from parents to offspring. Each organism has a different set of genetic units, i.e., a distinct and unique genotype, from that of every other individual (save in the case of identical twins). Consequently, the individual organism exhibits with respect to his set of observable characteristics, i.e., his *phenotype*, slight or large differences from every other individual. These phenotypic differences, it is important to remember, are not just the mechanical expression of different genotypes. In each case, the phenotypic differences are the result of the *interaction* of a specific genotype with a specific environment. What this means is that where Darwin takes into account only *two* sets of factors—the environment, and the observable characteristics of organisms—the new

[8] *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (New York, 1892), II, 28.

[9] The most important books by these men are: R. A. Fisher, *The Genetical Theory of Natural Selection* (Oxford, 1930); J. B. S. Haldane, *The Causes of Evolution* (London, 1932); Julian Huxley, *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis*; Th. Dobzhansky, *Genetics and the Origin of Species* (1st ed., New York, 1938); G. G. Simpson, *Tempo and Mode in Evolution* (New York, 1944). The contributions of Muller and Wright have appeared in biological journals and elsewhere. Cf. H. J. Muller, "The Darwinian and Modern Conceptions of Natural Selection," and Sewall Wright, "Population Structure in Evolution," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, XCIII, 1949, 459–78.

approach takes into account at least *three* sets of factors—the environment, the observable characteristics of organisms (the phenotype), and the genetic constitution (the genotype) which exerts a controlling influence on those characteristics. Heredity thus enters the evolutionary picture in a fundamental way.

This has led to a second important development. Attention has now come to be directed upon groups of organisms which do or can transmit genetic material through reproduction. Each such group is called a "local population" (since the members must be in spatio-temporal proximity with one another). It is also called an "interbreeding population" (since there must be actual or potential interbreeding among its members). For the sake of brevity, I shall speak simply of a "population." This is what a field or a laboratory biologist generally deals with when studying plants or animals. Indeed, it is now widely held that populations are the ultimate evolutionary units. Hence, if one asks the question: *What* is it that evolves? the answer is not "living organisms" or "species" but rather "populations."[10]

There has thus arisen a third novelty in current evolutionary thinking. Since at bottom evolution is a process undergone by populations; and since a population is made up of individual organisms; and since the genetic constitution of each organism consists of a set of discrete, relatively stable units (chromosomes and genes); and since these units are transmitted in varying combinations from one generation to the next, it becomes possible to represent the evolutionary process by means of a statistical model. Leaving aside all technical details, the model may be roughly described as follows. By an act of abstraction, a given population is regarded as an assemblage of genetic units (e.g. genes or pairs of genes), and to each unit a number is assigned indicating the frequency of its occurrence in the population. Since the laws governing the transmission of genes from parents to offspring, when all environmental influences are disregarded, have been well established, it becomes possible to work out statistically the behaviour of gene frequencies under a variety of environmental conditions. When interpreted in the light of this model, the primary evolutionary process appears as a *non-random or systematic change of gene frequency in a population.*[11]

Such a statistical model of evolution is valuable for several reasons. It provides a framework which permits the quantitative treatment of a large array of observations, and enables them to be brought into logical order. It reminds us that while evolutionary forces act on indi-

[10]Cf. Carter, *Animal Evolution*, 30, 207.

[11]Cf. Simpson, *Horses* (New York, 1951), 223–4; and Wright, in *Ecology*, XXVI, 1945, 415.

vidual organisms, the effects of those forces are exhibited not in individuals but in populations. It gives prominence to the fact that the changes produced in populations are not chaotic but show definite patterns. Finally, the model portrays a fundamental feature of the evolutionary process—perhaps, indeed, *the* fundamental feature—i.e., the systematic or orderly change of gene frequency mentioned above.

At the same time, we must not fall into the error of thinking that this model provides a *definition* of evolution or even a complete description of it. Strictly speaking, when it is said that evolution is a change in the genetic composition of populations, such that the proportions of genes and gene-sets are altered, the qualification needs to be added that this way of speaking refers to the *primary* or *elementary* evolutionary process, i.e., to so-called "micro-evolution." Whether the origin of higher categories of organisms (phyla, classes, families, etc.) is also to be understood in these terms remains a matter about which there is no general agreement at present.[12]

But perhaps the most striking result of the approach to evolution by way of genetics has been the change wrought in the interpretation of evolutionary causality. An outline of the views widely current in this field will serve to bring us within striking distance of the questions of "competition" and of "evolutionary direction" with which the latter part of this paper is to be concerned.

In a given local population the genetic material present in individuals is such that they vary slightly from each other and from their offspring, if any. Not only are the genetic units recombined in sexual reproduction so as to determine new phenotypic traits of individuals, but at rare intervals one of these units will undergo a radical change or "mutation." The effects of a mutation may be large, in which case they will generally prove lethal to the organism in which they occur; or the effects may be small, in which case they may prove beneficial to the organism in dealing with its environment. The most important sort of mutation is that of a gene, for then a wholly new genetic unit comes into being. Hence, it is sometimes said that such gene mutations provide evolution with its "raw material," since as a result of them new phenotypic characteristics, not inherited from the parents, arise in the individual, and are passed on to its offspring. Mutations are the ultimate source of hereditary variations which play such a vital role in evolution.

Now in a population, some individuals of each generation die before they reproduce, usually because they do not reach maturity.

[12]Cf. L. von Bertalanffy, *Problems of Life* (New York, 1952), 82 ff.; and R. Goldschmidt, "Evolution as Viewed by one Geneticist," *American Scientist*, XL, 1952, 84–98.

Their genetic constitutions have therefore no further influence on the population. Of those which do reproduce, some have more offspring than others. Hence the genetic constitutions of individuals having the most offspring will occur with the greatest frequency in subsequent generations, and will accordingly have the maximum determining effect on the population's evolution. There is, then, a complex process which goes on *within* a population, describable as a process of differential survival and differential reproduction. The outcome of this process is the perpetuation of certain genotypes and the disappearance of others, i.e., the systematic change of gene frequency in the population.

The expression "natural selection" is a convenient way of designating this complex process. In other words, the expression is used at present much more broadly than it was by Darwin, for it is understood to refer to the occurrence of differential survival and reproduction in a population. Of course, the environment continues to play an important part in this whole process. For if the environment is relatively stable, natural selection brings about the adaptation of members of the population to a particular way of life. In this case the tempo of evolution is slow. But if the environment is changing, selection makes use of mutations to bring about changes in the population so that its members become adapted to hitherto unoccupied but available ways of life. Here the tempo of evolution tends to be rapid. Thus, where Darwin construed evolution in terms of *one* fundamental cause (natural selection in his sense), most biologists at present construe it in terms of the *interaction of several causes*—the chief of which are genetic recombinations, mutations, and the group of processes designated by the phrase "natural selection."[13]

III

I come now to the question of how far this new view of evolution involves "competition" and the "struggle for existence." These two expressions, it will be recalled, were for Darwin broadly synonymous. It will also be recalled that his version of natural selection was logically dependent upon the belief that the struggle for existence pervades the whole of the organic world. Since natural selection is *the* means

[13]It should perhaps be added that this represents what has been called the "orthodox" interpretation, and doubts concerning it have sometimes been raised, even in high quarters. Cf. J. Gray in *Nature*, vol. 4397, Feb. 6, 1954, 227: "On one point all biologists are agreed: the basic concept of organic evolution has, for a century, stood unrivalled as a contribution to biological thought. . . . The status of natural selection is not quite so high. True, it is the only theory we have; but when judged as a working hypothesis it is disappointing to find so little advance in a hundred years. What new facts have been brought to light? How far can it be shown to have elaborated the pageantry of life since 1859?"

by which evolution takes place, the struggle for existence was regarded by him as a necessary condition of the evolutionary process. This was understood to mean that without the occurrence of physical combat, predatory activity, the devouring of one individual by another, the oppression of the weak by the strong, and the victory of the most powerful and self-assertive individuals, evolution would not go on. Hence the Darwinian doctrine was construed, in the words of T. H. Huxley, as "the gladiatorial theory of existence."[14]

Before examining this doctrine, we should remember that it came to be part of Darwin's theory because of the fact that his concept of natural selection was derived from Malthus. In chapter III of *An Essay on the Principles of Population*, Malthus introduces the expression "struggle for existence" to describe a situation common in the life of primitive men. "When they fell in with any tribes like their own, the contest was a struggle for existence, and they fought with desperate courage, inspired by the reflection that death was the punishment for defeat and life the prize of victory. In these savage contests, many tribes were utterly exterminated. . . ."[15] This idea was simply taken over by Darwin when he extended Malthusianism "to the whole animal and vegetable kingdom." He was not the first thinker, of course, to envisage the state of nature in terms of the struggle for existence. Hobbes, Buffon, Monboddo, and many others expressed similar views. Even the geologist Lyell wrote in his *Principles of Geology*—a work which Darwin studied closely while aboard H.M.S. *Beagle*—"In the universal struggle for existence, the right of the strongest eventually prevails. . . ."[16]

This gladiatorial interpretation of evolution had wide repercussions on nineteenth-century thought. To such men as Kropotkin and Drummond, it was an utterly false doctrine. The former's *Mutual Aid* (1902) and the latter's *The Ascent of Man* (1894), were written to show how false it was. To others, it constituted a problem. Thus, T. H. Huxley in his Romanes lecture, "Evolution and Ethics," was led to the conclusion that the ethical progress of society depends not on imitating the struggle for existence in nature, or on running away from it, but on combating it. Between moral man and immoral nature there is an irreconcilable opposition. To still others, the gladiatorial interpretation represented a profound truth, not only about organic nature but also about human society. Hence arose the group of ideas

[14]T. H. and Julian Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics, 1893–1943* (London, 1947), 82. The phrase occurs in T. H. Huxley's famous Romanes lecture, "Evolution and Ethics."

[15]Th. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principles of Population* (London, 1798), 47–8.

[16]C. Lyell, *The Principles of Geology* (London, 1830–3), II, 56.

known as "social Darwinism," espoused by such men as Herbert Spencer in England, Ernst Haeckel in Germany, and W. G. Sumner in the United States.

From the standpoint of present-day knowledge, this controversy can be seen to spring from a group of misconceptions. These misconceptions are partly due to the misleading connotation of the words "competition" and "struggle" which were used to characterize the evolutionary process, and partly due to a false interpretation of the facts. Consider the following example. A population of bacteria is put into a test tube containing nutrient broth, and the individual bacteria proceed to multiply. There will undoubtedly occur here a differential survival of certain genotypes in the population, i.e., natural selection will take place and hence an evolutionary process will result. Now we may say that the individual bacteria are "competing" with each other in the sense that the more food one of them consumes, the less is left for the rest. But the bacteria do not devour one another or engage in physical combat. There is no "struggle for existence" in the Darwinian sense going on. Similarly, when two species of grass are growing in the same meadow, they "struggle" with each other in the sense that only a limited amount of space is available for their growth and multiplication. But this "struggle" does not involve any gladiatorial strife or "war of all against all." Yet here again the differential perpetuation of various genotypes (natural selection) is at work, and the evolutionary process is quietly proceeding. Part of the trouble in such cases obviously lies in the emotional overtones of the words "competition" and "struggle." Their use by the Darwinians not only gave rise to specious controversies, but prevented a deeper penetration into the actual character of evolution.[17]

It is important to be clear that contemporary evolutionists do not deny that Darwinian selection, involving combat and the destruction of some individuals by others, *does* take place in nature. What they deny is that such a process is *essential to evolution*. The truth seems to be that Darwinian selection acts as an evolutionary force only under atypical circumstances, that it is a special case of natural selection in the broader, statistical sense. One could, I think, construct a statistical model of this situation and explore it in a precise way. Such an exploration would show that the probability of Darwinian selection occurring is in most cases smaller than the probability of non-Darwinian selection. But we cannot pursue the details of this in the present paper.

[17]Cf. Dobzhansky, "Heredity, Environment and Evolution," *Science*, CXI, Feb., 1950, 161–6. I am much indebted to this interesting paper.

There is one further point, however, to which I should like to draw attention because of its philosophical interest. Not only do the majority of biologists today regard the gladiatorial theory of evolution as a nineteenth-century myth, but they frequently point out that co-operation and mutual help *are* important elements in determining the evolutionary process. It thus appears that Kropotkin and Drummond were justified in emphasizing these elements in their opposition to the doctrine of the struggle for existence. They were wrong, of course, in thinking that co-operation and mutual help are incompatible with natural selection. The matter has been put as follows by Professor Dobzhansky: "It is easy to see that disoperation [mutual harm among species] is a form of relationship which is unstable in the evolutionary sense, and that it will tend to disappear and be replaced by co-operation and mutualism. Any genetic changes which increase the benefits, or diminish the harm to either associated species will be adaptively advantageous, and hence will be encouraged by natural selection."[18] Professor Simpson sums up the situation with his customary clarity in these words:

> Struggle is sometimes involved [in evolution] but usually it is not; and when it is, it may even work against rather than towards natural selection. Advantage in differential reproduction is usually a peaceful process in which the concept of struggle is irrelevant. It more often involves such things as better integration into the ecological situation, maintenance of a balance of nature, more efficient utilization of available food, better care of the young, elimination of intra-group discords (struggles) that might hamper reproduction, and the exploitation of the environmental possibilities.[19]

In short, the probability of survival *both of individual organisms and of populations* increases with the degree to which they harmoniously adjust themselves to their environment and to each other. The difference between this view of evolution and the doctrine of "nature red in tooth and claw" is so obvious as to require no comment.

IV

In this concluding section, I shall deal briefly with the question to which reference has already been made, viz., To what extent does

[18] *Genetics and the Origin of Species*, 285.

[19] *The Meaning of Evolution*, 222. Cf. P. R. Burkholder, "Co-operation and Conflict among Primitive Organisms," *American Scientist*, XL, 1952, 601: "Though struggle, conflict and elimination have long been emphasized by proponents of the Darwinian school, probably the most important basis for selection of fitness actually is the ability of associated components within organisms and in societies to work together harmoniously among themselves and in conformity with the physical environment." The same ideas have been effectively presented in W. C. Allee, *Cooperation among Animals* (New York, 1951), and Ashley Montagu, *Darwin, Competition & Cooperation* (New York, 1952).

present-day biological knowledge justify us in saying that evolution has a "direction," i.e., is not completely random? This question opens up a very large subject, and in the space of a few pages I can do no more than touch on a few aspects of it.

A possible confusion can be avoided if I make it clear right away that in considering whether we have any ground for saying that evolution has a direction, I am not concerned with what paleontologists call "long-term trends" *within* the evolutionary process. Such trends, representing steady changes which go on for millions of years in a population of organisms, are said to occur "in a straight line" and so to be directional in character. There are many examples of these trends in the fossil record, one of the most famous being that of the horse family; though even here, as Simpson has pointed out in his fascinating book, *Horses*, the changes were not strictly of a "straight-line" or orthogenetic sort, and can probably be accounted for on the basis of genetic factors together with natural selection. Furthermore, it seems beyond dispute that these long-term trends do not constitute the whole of the evolutionary process, since some phylogenetic lines display little or no direction of change. In any case, the investigation of such issues is a matter for paleontologists, not philosophers, and hence falls outside the present discussion.

The question I am concerned with is whether the evolutionary process *envisaged in its totality*, from its obscure beginnings to the present, can be said to have any "direction." The word "direction" here is, of course, metaphorical; but this does not make its use undesirable provided we can connect it with the presence of some over-all, evolutionary trends. Now it seems to me that we *can* point to such trends, among which the following are particularly notable.

1. There has been a broad trend in evolutionary history towards a net increase in the number of individual organisms and in the number of types of organisms inhabiting the earth. This trend has not been an uninterrupted one, to be sure, for at certain times a general reduction in numbers has apparently taken place. But the course of evolution as a whole has increased the total quantity of living matter on the globe, so that the process has been an incremental one from the outset. It has even been suggested by A. J. Lotka that this trend represents a basic law of evolution.[20] Whether that be the case or not, the occurrence of the trend itself seems undeniable.

2. The course of evolution has resulted in a net increase in both the size of living organisms and the complexity of their internal struc-

[20]"The Law of Evolution as a Maximal Principle," *Human Biology*, XVII, 1945, 167–94.

ture and functions. The earliest organisms were almost certainly small in size, if, as is now conjectured, they were nucleoprotein molecules or "protogenes." They were also, by comparison with many later forms, relatively simple in their organization and functioning. A majority of these later forms have showed a definite increase in their bodily dimensions as well as in the intricacy of their architecture. Exceptions to this trend can no doubt be discovered; but in general it seems true to say that the evolutionary process has been an amplifying and a complicating one.

3. Another broad trend has been towards the production of organisms having a greater and greater capacity to cope effectively with a variety of environments. These organisms thereby gained a measure of independence which their predecessors lacked. The earliest populations of living things were thus more vulnerable to major environmental changes than many populations which appeared later. The development, for example, of a mechanism for maintaining bodily temperature at a constant level despite temperature changes in the environment, conferred on its possessors the power to extend the range of their activities. Similarly with the development of a brain and central nervous system in vertebrates; and so on. Such facts have led biologists to say that many later organisms are "more efficient" *qua* organisms than earlier ones. Julian Huxley has even contended that such facts give us a ground for speaking about "progress" in evolution.[21]

4. I come next to a trend which is in some ways the most interesting of all. As the course of evolution has continued, living things have successively occupied more and more environmental niches on the earth. Whenever any region has developed the minimal properties required to sustain life, some population of organisms has nearly always proceeded to occupy and adapt itself to that region. Five hundred million years ago, all life was marine or aquatic. As soon as conditions on land became suitable, plant and animal forms seized the new opportunities, invaded the land, and adapted themselves to terrestrial modes of existence. Now there is scarcely a nook or cranny from the poles to the equator, from the mountain tops to the abysses of the ocean, which does not contain some types of living things, often fantastically specialized in form and function to meet the requirements of a particular niche. Moreover, when a new region has been occupied, the very presence in it of one type of population paves the way for other types to occupy it also. Thus, the appearance of land plants produced the conditions necessary for the appearance of land animals;

[21] *Evolution: The Modern Synthesis*, 556–78.

the bodies of land animals provided a new environment for bacteria; and so on. In short, not only has life exploited the possibilities of the physical world to a maximum degree, but other possibilities have been created by living forms themselves. This expansive or "opportunistic" feature of the evolutionary process is surely a remarkable one.[22] The whole process has gone on *as if* living things were the expression of a "force" which perpetually strives to exhibit itself in the maximum number of ways; which has not allowed organisms to remain in just a few environments but has driven them on into every available environment, even at the risk of excessive specialization and ultimate extinction. Whether any warrant can be found for making more than an "as if" statement here is a matter which I must leave undiscussed.

5. The last general tendency of the evolutionary process which I shall mention has to do with the phenomena of extinction and survival. Broadly speaking, the following situation is suggested by the evidence of paleontology. In the course of evolution an enormous number of types of organisms have flourished for longer or shorter periods, and then have completely disappeared from the face of the earth. These extinct types are sometimes referred to as "nature's unsuccessful experiments." The reference is not particularly apt, however, since some extinct types could be said to have been highly "successful" in adapting themselves to special conditions of environment. Yet there is certainly a significant difference between those lines of descent which have continued for millions of years down to the present, and those which literally came to a dead end. Now it seems to be the case that only the minor types of organisms have been thus extinguished, whereas all the major types have continued to survive (despite large fluctuations in numbers) from their point of origin in Cambrian times right down to the present. In other words, none of the basic types of animal organization known to biology has ever become extinct. In commenting on this generalization, Simpson states that it is one of the most important and remarkable conclusions to be derived from the broad picture of animal history; and, he adds, "it has far-reaching implications."[23] No philosophical student of evolution will, I imagine, be inclined to disagree.

The above five trends appear to me to be incompatible with any view of the evolutionary process as a whole which regards it as fortuitous or random.[24] That there are ostensibly random sequences

[22]Cf. Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution*, 160 ff. [23]*Ibid.*, 37.

[24]By "the evolutionary process as a whole" I mean the total history of all the populations which have existed on the earth. By "fortuitous or random" I mean, roughly, "following a course similar to that of the individual molecules in a gas or to that of minute particles in a fluid (Brownian movement)."

within the process, I should not deny. But the fact that the total movement of evolution has been incremental, amplifying, complicating, productive of increased efficiency, and expansive—in the senses of those words already specified—seems to allow us to say that it exemplifies a direction, or as Patten has put it, "a grand strategy."

If space were available, I should go on to ask whether this directional feature of evolution can be given a causal explanation, or whether the best we can hope for is a detailed historical description. An answer which favoured the former alternative would then lead us to ask whether the known factors of genetics and natural selection provide the kind of explanation required; or whether some additional explanatory principle has to be introduced. Special attention would need to be directed to a matter about which this paper has said nothing, namely, the relation of man to the evolutionary process. This is another area in which current biological thought has moved away from the strict Darwinian position in certain respects. The emphasis now tends to be put on what Julian Huxley has called "the uniqueness of man" as an evolutionary product.[25] Not only is he strikingly unlike other animal species in regard to various physical traits. He is also unique in his ability to construct tools or implements, and to use them for his own purposes. Most important of all is the fact that man is the leading, if not the sole, possessor of conceptual thought and speech. He is therefore unique among all living creatures in being subject both to the influence of physical heredity, and also to the influence of cultural heredity. Thus, *homo sapiens* lives predominantly in a new kind of environment, sometimes called the "nöosphere" or "world of mind." One of the results of this is that man is the only living creature which has begun to *understand* the process by which he has been produced, though in regard to many vital issues he remains scientifically and philosophically in the dark. All these matters remain to be dealt with; but they form part of another story.

[25]Cf. Julian Huxley, *Man Stands Alone* (New York, 1927), 1–33; and *Evolution in Action* (London, 1953), 134–53.

TENNYSON'S "ULYSSES"—A RE-INTERPRETATION

E. J. Chiasson

IT has long been recognized that Tennyson's *Idylls* are, among other things, the allegorical presentation of ideas which had found their place in a large number of poems, from "The Palace of Art" to "Lucretius" and "The Ancient Sage."[1] Such fidelity to a set of ideas need not surprise us in a poet who had always felt that "only under the inspiration of ideals, and with his 'sword bathed in heaven,' can a man combat the cynical indifference, the intellectual selfishness, the sloth of will, the utilitarian materialism of a transition age."[2] Yet despite this willingness on the part of critics to arrange much of the Tennyson canon in this perfectly convincing pattern, little attention has been paid to the intractability of "Ulysses," that is to say, to its virtual refusal to submit to such an arrangement. As a result "Ulysses" continues to be, what it has always been, something of a "sport" in Tennyson criticism. Although I do not intend to fit "Ulysses" into such a pattern by detailed references to the *Idylls*, I shall try to show that critical attention to the poem has stopped short of placing it precisely where it belongs, namely among the many expressions of Tennyson's conviction that religious faith is mandatory for the multitudinous needs of life.

Lacking such a view of the poem, critics of "Ulysses" (no longer enthusiastically restricting themselves to an admiration of its "gleam" qualities) think of it generally as a poem of relatively unresolved antinomies. One critic, regarding it as, at least intentionally, a "gleam" poem, is of course struck by the familiar disturbing Dantean conception of Ulysses' character, and concludes that "Ulysses" is a brilliant failure in which the "details are inconsistent, the reasoning specious, the whole a kind of brilliantly whited sepulchre. . . ."[3] Another critic,[4]

[1]F. E. L. Priestley, "Tennyson's *Idylls*," *UTQ*, XIX (1949), 48, lists some of the works which fit into this pattern, but his intention is to include "the whole of Tennyson's poetry." I do not know that Dr. Priestley subscribes to the view of "Ulysses" which I elaborate in this paper.

[2]H. Tennyson, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: A Memoir* (London, 1898), II, 129.

[3]P. F. Baum, *Tennyson, Sixty Years After* (Chapel Hill, 1948), 303.

[4]E. D. H. Johnson, *The Alien Vision of Victorian Poetry* (Princeton, 1952). Johnson recognizes, of course, not only Tennyson's suspicion of the anti-social devotion to the life of activity, but also the fact that Tennyson was too much of his time "to put the life of contemplation above the life of doing" (p. 40). His references, however, to "ambivalence" (p. xi) and "divided will" (p. 12) as conditioning elements in Tennyson's poetry, and his view of "Ulysses" and other poems as giving evidence "of the operation of private insights within poems ostensibly addressed to a Victorian audience" (p. 42), perhaps minimize the *positiveness* of Tennyson's answer in this poem to certain Victorian prepossessions,

most perceptive on the whole, sees in the poem evidence of a certain ambivalence in Tennyson's thinking; while still another detects a dichotomy between "Tennyson's own account of his meaning" and the "desolate melancholy music of the words themselves. . . ."[5] Charles Tennyson in his recent *Life* returns to the non-committal view that in "Ulysses" Tennyson "expressed his realization of the need for going forward and braving the battle of life, in spite of the crushing blow of Arthur's death."[6]

While it is true that "Ulysses" was written as a result of Hallam's death, the assumption has too quickly been made that this fact is by itself helpful to an understanding of the poem. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to suggest as an alternative that in "Ulysses" Tennyson is elaborating the belief, which was to become perennial with him, that life without faith leads to personal and social dislocation. Briefly stated, the position of this writer is that Tennyson is writing here not a mismanaged "gleam" poem or a poem which gives evidence of "the operation of private insights" though "ostensibly addressed to a Victorian audience," but a dramatic portrayal of a type of human being who held a set of ideas which Tennyson regarded as destructive of the whole fabric of his society.

It must be confessed that the celebrated passage from Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir* has assisted mightily in reinforcing the view of "Ulysses" as a paean to heroic effort. For Tennyson is quoted in the *Memoir* as saying: " 'Ulysses' . . . was written soon after Hallam's death, and gave my feeling about the need for going forward, and braving the struggle of life *perhaps more simply than anything in 'In Memoriam.'* "[7] Since this statement of purpose is, of course, somewhat cryptic, it is perhaps not surprising that most critics have taken it to mean that the character Ulysses is, in some measure at least, the spokesman of Tennyson, or that it is Ulysses who is to be construed as braving the struggle of life. It is possible, however, to interpret Tennyson's statement of purpose to mean simply that here he has given us his views on the general question of what an adequate pursuit of life means, and has given us no licence to assume that Ulysses is his spokesman, or that his architectonics have been obvious. That this wary reading of Tennyson's statement of purpose is not merely wilful is suggested by the italicized part of the above quotation

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and ignore Tennyson's statement of purpose. The use of such words as "ambivalence" at any rate seems to suggest the expectation of a somewhat simplistic and "one-layer" synthesis.

[5]C. C. Walcutt, "Tennyson's Ulysses," *Explicator*, IV (1946), 28.

[6]C. Tennyson, *Alfred Tennyson* (New York, 1949), 193.

[7]*Memoir*, I, 196. My italics.

wherein Tennyson asserts that his intention in writing "Ulysses" was, in some sense at any rate, identical with his intention in writing *In Memoriam*. If this convergence of intention is a fact, "Ulysses" will have to be re-examined in the light of *In Memoriam*. That is to say, we shall have to recall the answers which Tennyson, in *In Memoriam*, arrives at as solutions to his despair at Hallam's death, and remind ourselves in the process of what Tennyson means in that poem by braving the struggle of life.

In section XXXIV of *In Memoriam* and elsewhere, Tennyson expresses the pivotal doctrine of his creed, namely that life without immortality is not only meaningless but monstrous. It is indeed the conviction that immortality is a fact which enables him to rise above his despair. Certain corollaries, central to our purpose, follow from this belief. One of them, as we learn from section XXXV, is that without immortality love would become "mere fellowship of sluggish moods" or at its coarsest, a bruising and crushing urge which "bask'd and batten'd in the woods." Another resultant of this pivotal discovery, as we see from section LXVI, is a new awareness in the poet of the value of the softer affections, especially within a familial context. Section CVI, with its look into the future, is a measure of the more strictly social direction which his exaltation takes after he has conquered his despair. In section CIX he reflects on the great promise that Hallam had given of being "A potent voice of Parliament A pillar steadfast in the storm." But especially important to our purpose is Tennyson's statement of dissatisfaction with an extravagant intellectualism divorced from faith and love.[8] Guarding himself against obscurantism, he, none the less, in CXIV, deprecates knowledge which aims at "Submitting all things to desire," and refers to such knowledge as but "half-grown" and incapable of fighting "the fear of death." Finally the tribute to wedded love, in the latter part of the poem, focusses our attention, as it does in "The Two Voices," on another detail of Tennyson's conception of a properly oriented life. The overriding ideas of *In Memoriam*, are, perhaps, that it is not knowledge but wisdom, a

[8]A statement from *Memoir*, I, 317–18, gives Tennyson's views on both the shirking of responsibility and arrogant intellectualism: "If a man is merely to be a bundle of sensations, he had better not exist at all. He should embark on his career in the spirit of *selfless* and adventurous heroism; should develop his true self by not shirking responsibility, by casting aside all maudlin and introspective morbidities, and by using his powers cheerfully *in accordance with the obvious dictates of his moral consciousness*. . . . The real test of a man is not what he knows, but what he is in himself and in his relation to others." My italics. Spedding's estimate (*Memoir*, I, 192–3) of Tennyson's criticism of the Soul in "The Palace of Art" as one which "in the love of beauty, and the triumphant consciousness of knowledge, and intellectual supremacy, in the intense enjoyment of its power and glory, has lost sight of its relation to man and God," makes essentially the same point.

combination of faith and love, which is best calculated to serve the purposes of this life; and that pursuit of life and its values will take the form of religiously motivated action.

If we examine "Ulysses" in the light of this rather cursory analysis of certain features of *In Memorian*, keeping in mind Tennyson's statement that *In Memoriam* and "Ulysses" were written with much the same purpose in mind, we observe some of the familiar antinomies which, to this reader, need not go unresolved. Tennyson sets the tone early in the poem. Ulysses is speaking. There is a hard and incisive quality to his language, a hardness which includes the startling and un-Tennysonian connubial insensitivity of the phrase "matched with an aged wife." His scorn for his people and for the essentially gradual character of government is made clear by the tonal quality of the words "mete" and "dole," and by his view of his people as a "savage" race. The line of hard monosyllables, "That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me," taken together with the context of the first lines, stamps Ulysses as a hard, self-contained individual, contemptuous of his people, impervious to the softer affections, the sheer incarnation of "Renaissance" *superbia*.

The Dantean conception of Ulysses' character continues as the poem proceeds. But the tone changes; the flat, contemptuous language becomes rhetorical. Whereas the first five lines have given us some insight into Ulysses' character by telling us what he despises, the next twenty-seven serve the same purpose by telling us of his enthusiasms. "Drinking life to the lees" is but the obverse of the scorn of the opening lines, and gains reinforcement from the Byronic catholicity of the later line: "I am a part of all that I have met." The Faustian quality appears too, as it does in all Byronic heroes,[9] and one is reminded tonally of Milton's Satan, that arch-enemy of the prevailing hierarchy. It is well to remember that Ulysses establishes only the slightest hierarchical preference in his experiences. Though the thirst for the naked intellect is there, undiluted with any of the softer affections, it exists, as we might expect from the Dantean conception of Ulysses' character, cheek by jowl with, for Tennyson, an alarming lack of selectivity. Drinking life to the lees, drinking delight of battle with his peers, following knowledge like a sinking star—all render him abundantly lyrical. There is, moreover, no internal evidence that "life

[9]A passage from Mrs. Charles Randle's diary, quoted in *Memoir*, I, 277, provides us with a suggestion of how Tennyson felt, in 1848, towards the Faustian yearning for "completeness": "[Tennyson] Felt the grand intellectual power of *Faust*, but threw it aside in disgust at the first reading." The *Memoir*, II, 386, also tells us that Tennyson "was dominated by Byron till he was seventeen, when he put him away altogether."

piled on life" would have given Ulysses any increase of what Tennyson calls wisdom.[10]

As the poem shifts to a new accent, we observe one of the more familiar "disturbing" passages in it. At first view, this passage looks like a simple contrast between two ways of life—the life of infinite search as opposed to the life of conscientious absorption in duty. If we look at this passage in the light of the later *Idylls* with their studied juxtaposition of the active Arthur ideal and the Galahad mysticism, we can easily enough be misled into viewing "Ulysses" as an early careful statement by Tennyson of the legitimacy of aspiration along with a recognition that the more humdrum attention to household and civic duties, if more pedestrian, is none the less equally essential. Such a view seems indeed reinforced by the line "He works his work, I mine," which except for the inverted emphasis is essentially the view proposed by Arthur: " 'Ah Galahad, Galahad,' said the King, 'for such As thou art is the vision, not for these.' " The apparent position of the two poems would seem, except for the respective emphases, to be identical, i.e., both apparently recognize two modes of life.

But to lay such weight on the line, "He works his work, I mine," as if Ulysses were capable of such moderation, is to accept Ulysses as a responsible and, so to speak, Tennysonian spokesman—a procedure rather risky if I am correct in my analysis of Ulysses' character up to this point. But the immediate context, too, suggests that we should be somewhat wary of regarding Ulysses as inclined to such judiciousness. For the line in question is preceded almost immediately by the line "How dull it is to pause and make an end," and then by the scornful vibrations of "as though to breathe were life." The apparent, grudging respect which Ulysses has for Telemachus must be judged with this tonal vibration in one's ears.

For the scorn is evident not only in the tone of the words which remind us of Antony's damning praise of Brutus, but in the simple

[10]Tennyson seems determined to trip Ulysses up at every opportunity by making him subscribe to positions which, as we know from *In Memoriam*, Tennyson rejects. Ulysses' yearning for "life piled on life" is not an idea congenial to Tennyson. In *In Memoriam*, XLI, the thought that he may never catch up to Hallam, and that he will be "evermore a life behind" is "spectral doubt which makes him cold." In LXXXV Hallam's ascent into heaven is direct, without any intermediary steps to perfection. The *Memoir*, II, 474, tells us that Tennyson asked Sterling if he would accept this life as the preparation of more perfect beings, and, receiving an affirmative, said, emphatically, "I would *not*. . . ." It would seem that Tennyson, mindful of his purpose, deliberately allows Ulysses to be enthusiastic about things that he himself repudiates. For Tennyson gains his strength in his hard-won acceptance of life, not from rationalizations or from any conviction of the satisfactoriness of this life, certainly not from any aspiration for life piled on life, but from the intuitively derived conviction that this life is explained by an after life.

fact that Ulysses pretends to admire Telemachus for possessing the very qualities which we know he himself despises. He scorned, earlier, meting and doling "unequal laws unto a savage race," i.e., the prudence required for the shaping of means to ends, and yet professes to admire Telemachus for his "slow prudence to make mild a rugged people." The disingenuousness of Ulysses peeps out from behind this cynical inconsistency, as it does from behind his politic shift from "savage" to "rugged" as words to characterize his people.[11]

But Ulysses' disingenuousness is revealed more importantly in his movement from a denial of immortality ("that eternal silence") in the passage immediately preceding, to the thinly disguised irony of the later assurance that Telemachus, along with his other pedestrian virtues, may well be relied upon to pay "meet adoration" to the household gods. Later he will reiterate that "death closes all." Ulysses' anticipation of some "work of noble note" which will be "not unbecoming men who strove with gods," merely reinforces the view that he is content to leave the duty of adoration (with its recognition of hierarchy) to Telemachus, while he will *strive* either in company with or against the gods (in terms of hierarchy, either interpretation is damaging to Ulysses). The "comforting" assurance to his men, in the final section, that perhaps they shall reach the Happy Isles is tonally indifferent, and is uttered with the same equanimity which characterizes the admission that perhaps the gulfs will wash them down. Ulysses, it is clear, personally rejects, or is at least quite uninterested in, immortality, but remains capable of a kind of jovial agnosticism, designed perhaps to reassure some of his men.

The last section of "Ulysses" ends with the well-known burst of oratory. However, we must beware of viewing the exalted language which ends the poem as the culmination of the poem's meaning. It is precisely this mistake, the reading of the poem in the light of its conclusion rather than in the light of its beginning, which has led to past misinterpretations.[12] For the person who speaks this language is the person whom Tennyson has introduced to us as connubially insensitive, or as Roy Campbell would say, "Too sensitively nerved to bear

[11]Baum, *Tennyson, Sixty Years After*, 301. What I view here as disingenuousness, perfectly consistent with Ulysses' previously known character, Baum views as simply another example of Tennyson's failure to maintain consistency in his characterization.

[12]Baum, *ibid.*, thinks that the latter part of the poem represents Ulysses' "real dignity and nobility." He recognizes however that this nobility conflicts with the irresponsibility and contemptuousness of Ulysses in the beginning and middle of the poem. His conclusion is that Tennyson is guilty of "muddled thinking," and that "the Byronic was probably not intended for our ears, perhaps not entirely clear in the poet's." Another inference, as the whole tenor of this article suggests, is possible.

Domestication . . .," contemptuous of duty and the softer affections, proud in his relationships with the gods, disingenuous and contemptuous towards his own son and towards his own people; a man who pursues life with thoroughgoing indiscrimination, and who reaches at best a vague and undirected respect for the life of intellect. For Ulysses, in his last burst of oratory, is completely vague as to what he means by "to strive, to seek, to find." What it is he will not yield to is uncertain, unless it be the limitation inseparable from the orientation of his energies, affective and intellectual, towards some recognized hierarchical system.

It is incredible to suppose that Tennyson, in the light of his assertion that "Ulysses" was a simpler statement than *In Memoriam* of the necessity of braving the struggle of life, should have contradicted himself so abysmally. For the Byronic catholicity of Ulysses, compounded as it is of marital and social irresponsibility, pursuit of sensation, and adoration of the naked intellect, is thoroughly opposed to *In Memoriam*'s glorification of the marriage bond as symptomatic of and contributory to social solidarity, and opposed to the refusal of Tennyson, in *In Memoriam*, to allow the naked intellect to arrogate all powers to itself to the exclusion of faith and love. The scornful neglect of duty in "Ulysses" comes with a shock from the poet who had praised Hallam for the virtues which not Ulysses but Telemachus possesses. It is especially surprising that the pivotal doctrine of *In Memoriam*, namely the belief in immortality, the belief which serves as sanction for all other beliefs, and without which life becomes mere rutting and social disintegration, should become in "Ulysses" at best a subject for the display of a kind of jovial agnosticism. If, as Tennyson says, *In Memoriam* was written to convey his conviction that fear, doubt, and suffering will find answer and relief only through faith in a God of Love, "Ulysses" represents a rather curious coda to such an expression of faith.

To resolve such an apparent antinomy, we must bear in mind constantly the opening lines of the poem, and not expect Tennyson to wreck his poem by strident emphases. We know very early in the poem what kind of man Ulysses is, and no spate of impassioned rhetoric should make us forget that we must judge him in the light of that knowledge. We realize all along that there is nothing in this monologue which an exponent (ancient or modern) of the pagan *virtus*, with a capacity for guile, could not have said. The exaltation of the concluding lines, like that of Milton's Satan, is an exaltation predicated on rejection, and is but a measure of his misdirected energies. For just as Milton is not misled by Satan's courage, an essentially neutral quality, the value of which is to be determined by its object,

so Tennyson, whose affinities are Virgilian and Dantean rather than Homeric, recognizes that Ulyssean determination and courage, necessary as they are at certain junctures, are to be valued only if they contribute to the good life, personal and social.

"Ulysses" becomes, then, not at all a curious coda to *In Memoriam* if we regard it as a poem which proceeds by the method of indirection. Viewed in this way, it falls into place as the expression of one of the perennial interests of Tennyson, and can be read as the dramatic presentation of a man who has faith neither in the gods nor consequently in the necessity of preserving order in his kingdom or in his own life. As Tithonus is permitted, without the intrusion of the author, to reject life simply because life without term cannot give him a never-ending titillation of the senses,[13] and as the mariners in "The Lotos-Eaters" are permitted, with equal indifference on the part of Tennyson, to reject life and its duties because they see no sanction to life, so Ulysses is permitted to express with irresponsible directness a yearning for limitlessness, predicated on the scornful rejection of the Telemachuses and the Hallams of this world. To Tennyson these three "scorners of the ground" were only very superficially different. All three illustrated his constant conviction that disregarding religious sanctions and "submitting all things to desire" lead to either a sybaritic or a brutal repudiation of responsibility and "life." Tithonus and Mark (in the *Idylls*) are the two ends of the spectrum. Ulysses lies between. "Ulysses" then takes its place in the pattern which is woven throughout Tennyson's poetry, sometimes negatively and hesitantly, as he resolves his own spiritual conflicts, sometimes positively. Tennyson, in "Ulysses," is well past the hesitancy of "The Two Voices," and has reached the conviction of *In Memoriam*, if not the triumphant assertiveness of "The Ancient Sage."

[13]The *Memoir*, I, 459, quotes a letter to the Duke of Argyll in which Tennyson says: " 'Tithonus,' written upwards of a quarter of a century ago . . . was originally a pendant to the 'Ulysses' in my former volumes. . . ." The *Memoir*, II, 70, also quotes a conversation with Frederick Locker-Lampson: " 'I spoke with admiration of his "Ulysses"; he said, "Yes there is an echo of Dante in it." He gave "Tithonus" the same position as "Ulysses." ' " Tennyson's use of the word "pendant" rather than "antithesis" would suggest that Tithonus and Ulysses are either partners in crime or victims of an identical lack of adequate "theology." There is, indeed, a great similarity between the predicaments of both. Tithonus, reduced totally to his own resources, which are gradually decaying, wants to die. Ulysses is not yet so desperate, for Ulysses, it might be said, is a younger Tithonus who is still, as Tithonus once was, buoyed up by the quotidian promise of "growing dewy-warm." But there is in Ulysses the somewhat disturbed awareness of the fact that "We are not now that strength which in old days Moved earth and heaven," and it will not be long before Ulysses will be doubly convinced (as Tithonus now is) that mere breathing is not living. The conclusion of both poems would seem to be that the absence of belief in an after life makes meaningful life impossible.

CONTEMPORARY "SYNTHETIC" SCOTS

GEOFFREY WAGNER

IT was in *La Revue Anglo-Américaine* for April, 1924, that Denis Saurat, then of Bordeaux, first used the word "renaissance" in connection with the contemporary literary movement in Scotland. This has often been thought a rather appropriate locale for the first recognition of a cultural movement that aimed to put poetry in Scots back into the main stream of European letters. In fact there is a reference to a "rebirth" (though not "renaissance") in the *Scottish Chapbook* for January, 1923, a periodical published in Montrose by C. M. Grieve. In the next three months, Grieve contributed his now famous "Causerie" columns to this periodical, suggesting a "Theory of Scots Letters" he was soon to implement so vigorously himself as "Hugh MacDiarmid." References to a Scottish renaissance soon followed, both in and out of the country, until in 1926 this literary *risorgimento* can be seen to have attracted wide European (including Icelandic) attention.

The historian of the movement, W. R. Aitken, the Perth and Kinrosshire County Librarian, attributes this renaissance to the general recrudescence of nationalism in minority cultures after the First World War. The young poet Hamish Henderson, or Seumas Mor Macean-ruig, puts more emphasis on the "growth to political maturity of the Scottish working class during World War I." He instances here the influence of the Scottish working-class leader of this period, John MacLean. However this may be, a body of poetry in Scots began flowing from the indefatigable pen of Hugh MacDiarmid at about this time, in *Sangschaw* (1925), *Penny Wheep* (1926), and the recently re-issued *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), a long poem rather than another collection of short lyrics, and one which most Scots critics rate his greatest achievement. From this date on a fairly typical *cinquecento* renaissance, if on a small scale, can be traced in Scotland, MacDiarmid being quickly joined in the propagation of its aims by William Power.

This renaissance, MacDiarmid enunciated, should derive its strength from the essence of everything truly Scottish. Its programme was to include the development of a literature from the vernacular, both aligned with contemporary European tendencies and opposed to the prevailing values stemming from London. This would involve, he went on, a revaluation of the Scottish past, especially of the use of the

vernacular before Burns ("Not Burns—Dunbar!"), and it would require conditions of political and economic independence, so that all aspects of the Scottish spirit, including the Gaelic, could express themselves fully. From the first MacDiarmid and Power demanded full freedom of expression and complete self-consciousness for their country: "among our main tasks must be a systematic exploration of the creative possibilities of Braid Scots and a recapture of our lost Gaelic background." To this end, MacDiarmid began to formulate a theory of "synthetic" Scots, in an effort, that is, to assemble and recover the potentialities of a literary medium that had once been the heritage of the whole country but which is now largely split up into local tongues.

As students of Scottish literature know, this term was originally adopted as defining a putting-together, or synthesizing, of disparate elements of language, characteristic of the fifteenth-century makars. Unfortunately it is still taken as meaning simply *ersatz*. It occurs in this latter sense in Kenneth Rexroth's introduction to his recent anthology of British poetry, published by New Directions, where a proper proportion is allotted, and allotted for the first time, to the poetry of the Scottish renaissance. Rexroth's error, however, is far more excusable than that made in a survey published recently by Alan Ross, called *Poetry 1945-1950*, where we find the British Council sponsoring the following statement in reference to four mis-grouped and misspelt contemporary Scottish poets: "Nearly all these writers use Gaelic and English with equal facility." The Lallans makars, as they call themselves, have been accused of most things, but never before, I believe, of writing Gaelic. Incidentally, the use of "synthetic" Scots to mean substitute Scots strikes the Scot himself as funny. In the last part of Lewis Grassic Gibbon's trilogy in Lallans (or "lallanized Suddron" as Douglas Young prefers to call the medium Gibbon used), for example, we find a comment on it as such, in connection with a character who is clearly meant to be Hugh MacDiarmid. Gibbon, who collaborated with MacDiarmid in what is still one of the pithiest general volumes on Scotland, called *Scottish Scene*, was one of the more notable prose writers of this renaissance but died in his early thirties in 1935.

The question of the use of "synthetic" Scots still remains one of the most controversial, and possibly decisive, issues of the renaissance. MacDiarmid himself immediately put a high value on such an integration of the language, making comparisons with minority cultures in Spain, France, and Norway. Scots reality, he felt, could only be sincerely expressed by exploiting all the resources of the Scottish language, and this might only be achieved by using a linguistic amalgam.

His first emphatic statement on the subject was in his *Contemporary Scottish Studies* (1926), in reply to a preface, dated December, 1921, by the poet-sculptor, James Pittendrigh MacGillivray, to his *Bog-Myrtle and Peat Reek* of 1922. This preface is an anticipatory attack in that it antedates any explicit reference to contemporary "synthetic" Scots, as it antedates any actual practice in the medium (the 1920 and 1921 issues of *Northern Numbers* containing only poems in English by Grieve-MacDiarmid). It shows that the idea of a collated canon of the Scots language, such as MacDiarmid later proposed, was in the air at the time, as Professor Gregory Smith's students know it was. Indeed, Power, in the 1926 *Burns Chronicle*, traces the revival to Stevenson and Logie Robertson (author of *Horace in Homespun*), and Aitken advances the view that Dr. MacGillivray (who was born only six years after Stevenson) was attacking, via his preface, Stevenson's Note to *Underwoods* (1887) where we find: "I simply wrote my Scots as well as I was able, not caring if it hailed from Lauderdale or Angus, from the Mearns or Galloway." This technique, which is that of MacDiarmid's "synthetic" Scots and can be seen, in Stevenson's case, in that brilliant short story, *Thrawn Janet*, drew the following criticism from Dr. MacGillivray: "to assemble obsolete words from periods remote and from dialects of districts apart and strange to each other in idiom and in the pronunciation of the same words, may produce a kind of literary language of Scots for the scholarly appreciation of those who have no intimacy with the voice of any of our dialects; but the result, although often witty enough, and obviously truly sympathetic in the intention, can never, I think, touch the heart like a true native diction from any one of the quarters."

MacDiarmid disagreed with this regional view, and in doing so stated what has been his position *vis-à-vis* the vernacular ever since: "I see no reason why an artificially and quite arbitrarily contrived 'generalized' Scots should not yet become an effective medium just as the Norwegian *landsmaal* has done. . . . The true line is a synthetic Scots gathering together and re-integrating all the *disjecta membra* of the Doric and endeavoring to realize its latent potentialities along lines in harmony at once with distinctive Scots psychology and contemporary cultural functions and requirements."

This contention, then, is the crux of the argument about the language of contemporary poetry in Scots; meanwhile, over the past thirty years, there has been increasing evidence of a Scottish renaissance. The Second World War has recently given fresh impetus to Scottish nationalist aspiration. Such a body of literary achievement,

of one sort or another, has grown up by now in the vernacular and so much official recognition been accorded the Doric that it is no longer a problem for the sincere young Scottish poet of using either English or Doric so much as what degree of the Doric to employ. In this, the theory of "synthetic" Scots plays a large part.

The problem of English or Doric is, of course, still discussed by the older generation. It was first put forward in direct opposition to MacDiarmid by Edwin Muir in his *Scott and Scotland: the Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (1936). Here Muir, now Warden of Newbattle Abbey College, stated unequivocally:

> when we insist on using dialect for restricted literary purposes, we are being true not to the idea of Scotland but to provincialism. . . . If we are to have a complete and homogeneous Scottish literature it is necessary that we should have a complete and homogeneous language. Two such languages exist in Scotland, and two only. The one is Gaelic and the other is English. There seems to me to be no choice except for these . . . and of these two alternatives English is the only practicable one at present, whatever Gaelic may become in the future.

This position, which, in Muir's case, the British Council was quick to reward, also finds expression today in the *Scots Chronicle* (formerly the *Burns Chronicle*), whose editor equally firmly opposes the existence, or possibility of existence, of "synthetic" Scots. For instance, in his 1951 issue, he appends this note to an article on "Plastic Scots" by Professor John Orr: "*Plastic Scots, Synthetic Scots.* A theoretical language still to be created out of the surviving dialects. The word 'Lallans' (more correctly 'Lallan'-Lowland) has been used recently in the same sense."[1]

This view has had a recent and revealing airing in the correspondence columns of that most catholic daily paper, *The Scotsman*. This correspondence, into which figures of the eminence of Dr. Agnes Mure

[1]To avoid confusion, it should be said that "plastic Scots" was a derisive label given to the medium MacDiarmid was evolving by James Fergusson of the *Glasgow Herald*, a newspaper to which MacDiarmid has never been kind, as can be seen in the reference at the end of this essay. However, Fergusson's label stuck, mainly because it was quickly taken up and defended as such by Douglas Young, of St. Andrew's University, the pedant of the present movement, in a variety of pamphlets.

Secondly, the editor of the *Scots Chronicle* mistakenly corrects the modern makars in their nomenclature, for Lallans (pl.) was deliberately adopted as a defining term from Burns' *Epistle to William Simpson of Ochiltree*, where it places emphasis on the speaking, rather than reading, habits of the Scots populace:

> In days when mankind were but callans;
> At grammar, logic an sic talents,
> They took nae pains their speech to balance,
> Or rules to gie;
> But spak their thochts in plain braid Lallans,
> Like you or me.

Mackenzie and Professor David Murison entered on the side of the vernacular, arose from a condemnation of the dialects of Scotland by the Director of Education for Orkney ("the dialects are not pretty and their literature is small"). It continued, over anglicized B.B.C. announcers on the Scottish radio, and it showed, when set beside the new curricula advice and the new Scottish readers going into the schools, that today, thirty years after the inception of the renaissance and after the abortive campaign then of the Burns Federation to get Lallans accepted in the schools, a whole new official attitude sympathetic to the vernacular has grown up. Rexroth lent a friendly ear to what he called the "deafening commotion going on in Scotland." Since the end of the last war we have seen Edinburgh University establish a new School of Scottish Studies (the Phonetics Department of which recently sponsored Hamish Henderson's delightful recordings of bothie ballads and anecdotes from the Buchan, the northeast or "cold shoulder" of Scotland, still one of the richest repositories of folk idiom in western Europe). We have also seen a vernacular dictionary proceeding at Aberdeen University, Glasgow set up a new lectureship in Scottish literature, and, in the United States, an Assistant Librarian of Congress make a series of authoritative recordings of spoken Scots.

Although one must not overemphasize this new feeling, Scottish officialdom has certainly changed its attitude in the past quarter-century and for this no one more than Hugh MacDiarmid is responsible. Indeed, MacDiarmid has been far more responsible and canny in his campaigning than most people like to think, for he knows that it is the schools that will really safeguard the language and he has accordingly brought pressure to bear to this end. Even in 1940, when in his introduction to *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* he reiterated his belief in "synthetic" Scots in what may have been a reply to Muir, he was backed by a body of practical example not only from his own pen, but from such poets as Alexander Gray, Violet Jacob, Lewis Spence, William Jeffrey, Charles Murray (author of *Hamewith*, a poem in itself, as Aitken says), and William Soutar. Soutar was perhaps the strongest poet of this generation after MacDiarmid. Unappreciated in America, I think, he had the good luck to live in Perth and carries over to the second generation of Scottish poets whom we have before us now, and including Alexander Scott, Norman McCaig, Albert Mackie, Sydney Goodsir Smith, Maurice Lindsay, Douglas Young, John Kincaid, Hamish Henderson, and the Gaelic poet, Somhairle MacGhill Eathain, or Sorley Maclean. And the problem confronting this generation (outside the Gaelic writers) is surely one of the definition of the Doric, rather than a fight to use it at all.

One should, in passing, stress the fact that MacDiarmid has constantly encouraged the use of Gaelic, believing it alone capable of effecting shades of reality that are inimitably Highland. He early encouraged the Gaelic poet, Deorsa Caimbeal Hay (George Campbell Hay), translated Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair, and printed portions of Sorley Maclean's epic of a mountain range, *Cuillin*, in periodicals he controlled. MacDiarmid is, indeed, more aligned to West Coast culture in Scotland than to Edinburgh (where Sydney Smith lives) and the East. Yet the North American reader, wanting a fair picture of the renaissance, should bear in mind that comparatively few people in Scotland speak Gaelic. In 1931 the Scottish census gave the number of persons speaking only Gaelic as 6,716 and those speaking both Gaelic and English as 129,419 (a total of 136,135); the corresponding figures in 1951 are 2,652 and 91,630 (a total of 94,282). Despite this rather tragic decrease, MacDiarmid claims an increase in intelligent interest in Gaelic recently. In this he may be right. The new monthly, *Scottish Journal*, always finds space for Gaelic culture each issue. Although Gaelic cannot be seen as the majority culture of Scotland, Scots poetry, as Matthew Arnold among others was aware, has more vital roots in Celtic civilization than mere language census can show.

As far as the Lallans makars are concerned, their main controversy, which is by no means easy to isolate and explain, presents itself in its broadest boundaries as a *débat* between the Lindsay-Young school of thought and the so-called Clyde Group. The former are more academic. Young, a political as well as cultural controversialist, has surrounded his own poetic production with pamphlets, consistently advocating an heroic genealogy for Scots and doing all he can to break down the popular English (and American?) superstition, so exasperating to the Scots mind, that the Doric is a dialect of King's English in the sense of a pejorative corruption of a parent-tongue. The Lindsay-Young position is one of linguistic purism and they have criticized writers like Grassic Gibbon for failing to use a full canon of the vernacular.

Opposed to this rather rigid position, the Clyde Group take a more flexible view of the Doric, as I understand the situation. This group includes John Kincaid of Glasgow ("ma douce raucle citie"), "Thurso Berwick," and Hamish Henderson. They want "more Maclean and less Mahoun"—Mahoun meaning here the devil (as Henderson puts it, the "darling" of Scottish literature). It is not representing them unfairly, I think, to say that they want more concentration on social reality than on linguistics and so would not quibble at the Doric being used simply as the language of emotional stress, to be

injected into an English poem, even, as the English failed emotionally to convey shades of reality typically Scottish.

In this connection it would be hard to find, in passing, a less friendly misunderstanding of Scottish poetic aims than that shown by Stanley Edgar Hyman writing in the *Kenyon Review* for Winter, 1954. Confessing himself "an American innocent of linguistics," Mr. Hyman yet claims that "the relationship of literary Lallans . . . to any language spoken in the Scottish Lowlands is obscure." This may well seem so to a staff writer for the *New Yorker*, but it remains an academic judgment in the Canongate. The ugliest element in Mr. Hyman's essay, however, is his attempt to discredit MacDiarmid by evaluating him on the basis of the *Hymns to Lenin*, especially the second, a mainly English poem. In an article of eighteen pages, the body of which is quotation, Mr. Hyman makes no single reference to *Sangschaw, Penny Wheep*, or *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, let alone *Lucky Poet* and so on—there is a passing sneer at *To Circumjack Cencrastus*. In view of the wellnigh malicious misrepresentation of MacDiarmid by this critic, it is perhaps not unfair to point out that none of the volumes Mr. Hyman ignores are, in fact, readily available in the major New York libraries. The *Hymns to Lenin* are. And of course these early lyrics do require the critic to know some Scots, so that when Mr. Hyman writes, "I must confess to finding most of Hugh MacDiarmid unreadable," he is being, I am sure, modestly frank. Yet he concludes that "a bilingual enterprise, in the attempt to invigorate poetic English with the resources of Scots" should be the solution, as though this were his discovery and had not been the contention of the Clyde Group for ten years or more. Moreover, this "solution" seems to be precisely what Mr. Hyman has spent his eighteen pages in deriding, via judicious quotation.

Sydney Smith, whom some consider the best lyric (and especially love lyric) poet since Burns, may keep apart from these internecine squabbles, but he has frequently insisted in print, particularly in the late, and lamented, *Scots Review*, on the living language of actual people as the ultimate authority for his vocabulary. This is Professor Angus M'Intosh's refreshingly unacademic approach, in his current linguistic survey of Scotland ("How do you tell a horse to turn to the left?" his questionnaire asks, and "What do you term your local pig sty?").

To some extent this differentiates the contemporary "synthetic" Scots, urged by MacDiarmid, from the Scots variously employed by Burns who, in the last analysis, Aitken writes, did little to challenge the steady decline of Scots poetry since the makars, and even "betrayed" the brief effort of the eighteenth century to do so. The

"Heaven-taught ploughman," as Henry Mackenzie rather sentimentally described Burns, created what David Daiches has recently called "a glorious Indian Summer for native Scottish literature" mainly out of three traditions—Lallans, Gaelic, and eighteenth-century "genteel" poetry of the Edinburgh literati. Though Burns proved he could use a fairly pure folk idiom on occasion, his case in this context is best put, Aitken believes, by John Buchan, introducing his anthology of Scots poetry, *The Northern Muse*:

> Burns is by universal admission one of the most natural of poets, but he used a language which was even in his own day largely exotic. His Scots was not the living speech of his countrymen, like the English of Shelley, and—in the main—the Scots of Dunbar; it was a literary language subtly blended from the old "makars" and the refrains of folk poetry, much tinctured with the special dialect of Ayrshire, and with a solid foundation of English, accented *more Boreali.*

What MacDiarmid has wished to organize, on the other hand, is a junction of spoken and written word in Scotland, an association of sensibility, as it were, for he has sensed in Lallans a language where the two levels of communication, factual and decorative, are still integrally knit together. Beyond this, of course, he has felt that an especial amount of that traditional wisdom, which is the essence of democratic individualism, has concentrated itself in modern Scotland.

The first of these claims will always remain controversial. David Daiches, in an admirable article on MacDiarmid in *Poetry*, believes that Scots words like "kyths" and "unkennable" are still pregnant with emotional significance and "convey at once their special kind of reverberation, their deep sigh of meaning unobtainable in contemporary English poetry." He asks, "Could anybody thrill to 'Old Long Since'?" Let us set one of MacDiarmid's most famous poems, *The Eemis Stane*,[2] alongside a prose translation of it made recently by Henderson which keeps close to the spirit of the original (for example, MacDiarmid glosses the almost untranslateable *yowdendrift* as "a gale driving down"; Henderson calls it "a downdrive of snow"):

> I' the how-dumb-deid o' the cauld hairst nicht
> The warl' like an eemis stane
> Wags i' the lift;
> An' my eerie memories fa'
> Like a yowdendrift.

[2]Orthographical changes, some authorized by the poet, some not, have been made in this poem, since the *Sangschaw* collection. For instance, Young, in his *"Plastic Scots" and the Scottish Literary Tradition* (p. 16), has transcribed a version that seems to be without authority. The text in *Selected Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed. R. Crombie Saunders (Glasgow, 1944), pp. 3, 11, has the poet's sanction. The text printed here is that of the first edition of *Sangschaw*.

Like a yowdendrift so's I couldna read
The words cut oot i' the stane
Had the fug o' fame
An' history's hazelraw
No' yirdit thaim.

In the very dead of the cold harvest night the world like a loose tombstone sways in the sky, and my eerie memories fall like a downdrive of snow.

Like a downdrive of snow, so that I could not see the words cut out in the stone—even if the moss of fame and the lichen of history had not overgrown them.

The difficulty, so-called, of such poems as these, which can be seen to be not great, is the usual form of attack on the Lallans makars, and the large glossaries that must accompany their productions (for a *literary* audience, let it be said) is instanced in support. For example, Sydney Smith's *The Wanderer* carries twenty poems, yet over 350 entries in its glossary, J. G. Horne's twenty-page poem, *A Lan'wart Loon*, has a gloss of over four pages; and Albert Mackie's *Sing a Sang o' Scotland* has as many as 500 words in its glossary. In a way, this does no more than point up the difficulty MacDiarmid is trying to encounter in his theory of "synthetic" Scots, namely the dispersal of the general Lallans vocabulary into local stocks of words—most of which would be understood by the country people of the district. ("The peasantry," Jamieson wrote in the preface to his great dictionary, "are the living repositories of the ancient language of every country.") It is in recognition of this that Professor M'Intosh is stressing the rural nature of his linguistic survey:

There seems to be something fitting in this attempt to reach out from the specialists in a university . . . to those indispensable and hitherto all too insufficiently recognised experts who deserve that title in this context by virtue of being in possession of a knowledge of their own everyday dialect. This, it is hoped, will prove to be a practical way of demonstrating the fact that it is not only from academic institutions and libraries that learning can emanate. . . . Scholarship has till recently been more preoccupied with the evidence provided by books and manuscripts than with that which can be obtained by exploring the knowledge of everyday people.

Today, over a quarter of a century after the start of the renaissance, MacDiarmid can justifiably congratulate himself on attitudes such as these. Thirty years ago, this "stone among the pigeons," as he was to style himself in the jubilee issue of the Edinburgh University magazine, *The Student*, stood alone. Today he can look back on two generations of Scottish poets, on a new political orientation for his

country, and an altogether different prestige enjoyed by the vernacular. Above all, he has made it possible, indeed natural, for poets both to write in Scots and be judged by fully European standards, a rather large accomplishment when one glances at the history of Scots verse since Burns. By, as it were, bodily throwing poetry in Lallans into the main stream of European letters (he was translating European poets, later fashionable in Bloomsbury, long before the English intelligentsia got at them), MacDiarmid fulfilled his original intention "to keep Scotland in the main march of the world's interests," as Buchan put in in his preface to *Sangschaw*. Scotland's "lucky poet," as he half-ironically styles himself, has known few other rewards, however, despite the entry in Kunitz and Haycraft's *Twentieth Century Authors*, which is little more than a tissue of errors under C. M. Grieve, and which describes this poet who has known nothing but bitter poverty all his life as a plutocrat indulging in occasional John Bull baiting. To which the best answer is the celebrated "hokum" passage in the long satire, *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, where we read:

It isna fair to my wife and weans
It isna fair to mysel',
To persist in poverty-stricken courses
And never ring Fortune's bell.
Thoosands o' writers wi' nae mair brains
In their heids than I've in my pinkie
Are rowin' in wealth while I toil for a dole,
—Hoo's that accountit for, thinkee?

Oh, it's easy, easy accountit for, fegs.
I canna gie the folk hokum.
I can poke 'em and shock 'em and mock 'em,
But the a'e thing needfu' is hokum!
It pits a'thing else on its legs. . . .

It maitters little what line ye tak'
If you hae hokum wi't;
Butter or snash, it's a'alike,
Gar them laugh or greet.
There's naething the public winna stand
And pay for through the nose,
Barrin' the medicine that ser'd up neat,
Whether it's bitter or whether it's sweet,
Wi' nae hokum to the dose.

But what I canna account for's no'
Bein' able to gie folk hokum.
I can joke 'em and sock 'em and choke 'em
But the a'e thing needfu' is hokum.
—I wish I was Neil Munro.

It isna fair to my wife and weans,
It isna fair to mysel'.
The day's lang by when Gaels gaed oot
To battle and aye fell.
I wish I was Harry Lauder,
Will Fyffe or J. J. Bell,
—Or Lauchlan Maclean Watt
For the maitter o' that!
—Dae I Hell!"

This last quotation, then, not only shows MacDiarmid in a satiric mood (he is nearly always anthologized and considered in the United States as a lyric poet), it also demonstrates the flexibility of his "plastic multilingo," as Hamish Henderson calls it, which becomes far more English in this context. Today MacDiarmid reserves this bitter satiric gift he possesses for occasional political poetry. Recently he produced *A Poem For Christmas, 1952*, most of which would probably be unpublishable in the United States at the moment. Here is one of the milder stanzas:

Yet born in the Twentieth Century
Christ micht hae been a conscript or conchie
Or singled oot in a loyalty check
By M.I.5 maybe as a Commie
While (Glasgow or Daily) Herald angels sang
Peace on earth to the tune of Whizz Bang.

Edwin Muir also wrote a Christmas poem at this time. It was published in the *Observer* and concluded,

The childish starlight glimmers here
In the green firmament of the tree,
And the soft dreamings of the year
Lead in Judaea and Galilee.

In short, this nationalistic emphasis on the vernacular, the natural tongue of the Lowland Scot, looks for a solution to the crisis of literary communication in our age not in books, but in the living world around it. "Synthetic" Scots says, with Stewart Alan Robertson's *A Moray Loon* of 1933,

Oor auld Scots tongue has rowth o' gear,
She keeps nae scrimpit board;
'Fill fu' and fetch mair,' is their cry,
That kens hoo weel she's stored.

REVIEWS

THE PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH OF REID MacCALLUM*

THOMAS G. HENDERSON

Judging from his book, Reid MacCallum was a man whose ability in manipulating abstractions did not blanket his sensitivity to the implications of immediately felt experiences. By this is meant that in his posthumous volume of collected essays MacCallum masters a wide variety of abstract theories; yet at the same time he approaches these theories in the perspective of the sort of thing that *any* theory is. This procedure enables him to reap the value of sundry theoretical insights without being fooled by an over-extended application of these insights to the richness of concrete facts. And when he thus separates the gold in theory from overgeneralized straws he uses as a sifter what is evident from the pages of this book, namely his own sensitive, discriminating, and inclusively oriented nature.

Such an attitude towards abstract theories and the experiential facts they are intended to fit is expressed in the penultimate chapter. Here we find a well-balanced account, from a contemporary point of view, of how philosophy should be a development of the Delphic injunction to "Know Thyself." A conception of the broadest possible role that philosophy has to play is worked out. This role is described negatively by saying that anyone is unphilosophical in so far as his generalizations narrow down authentic human experience to only one of its ranges—to, say, a range of either external sense or of aesthetic or moral or economic or religious experience. This wise warning is supported in the last paper by the assertion that a well-rounded philosophy should not confine itself to considering our human selves as known objects at the expense of approaching these same selves as also being acting subjects or agents. And MacCallum's own caution to avoid unfairness to anything that can be used as evidence for a philosophy is taken seriously throughout his book. More specifically, his concentration on aesthetics illustrates how a philosopher should be fair to all the relevant evidence. This is to be seen in the chapter on contemporary aesthetic theory, where he shows that several of the more recent aestheticians abuse the evidence available to them. They either confine that evidence to only a selection of the arts or they go

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beyond the pertinent evidence to stress something such as pleasure or empathy which is of wider scope than the strictly artistic.

The theme underlying this criticism of current aesthetic theory is given a fascinating and happily detailed exposition in the first three, and the longest, chapters of this volume. Thus chapter I, which is the title essay of the collection, is devoted especially to painting, and it argues a strong case for aesthetic justice being done to both expressive design and the imitation of nature. This justice leads to a "significant marriage" in which a formal design that expresses emotion is the partner of prime importance—the husband. The wife is the objective reference of forms which imitate or represent the natural world, and she is subordinate to her husband in so far as she contributes associations which enhance and specify the expression of emotion through form. In other words, MacCallum takes the expression of subjective feelings to be the dominant aim of the painter, and this expression is achieved by forms which have at least some degree of resemblance, though certainly not a literal resemblance, to what we find in the objective world about us.

During the course of working out this conception of the expressive role performed by resemblance or imitation, he gives his reasons for thinking that imitation should be a *via media* between the extremes of merely copying and being altogether absent. Certain facts in the history of religion, morality, logic, and aesthetics are used to show why a painter does not, and should not, aim at the extreme of a literal representation of nature. And further reasons are given why an artist should not go to the other extreme of creating a totally non-representative picture. Such complete non-objectivity is rejected because of its failure to supply that associative context which vitalizes an otherwise too limited specification of feeling by purely abstract lines and colours. Moreover these abstract paintings, with their "arrogant pretension" to overestimate the creativity of an artist, are also regarded as lacking that desired humility which is "a readiness to accept and abide by the limitations of created nature."

The second chapter deals mainly with the sense in which poetry can be said to be true. As in the case of painting, and all the other arts too, poetry reveals truth in so far as it illuminates that order of reality which is our personal selves as feeling subjects. But here again MacCallum acknowledges the need of taking into account the different aspects of a given situation. He reminds us that the inner order of states of consciousness can only have light shed on it by means of that other order of reality which is the objective or external world. It is

images or likenesses of this outer world that are used by the poet in order to symbolize, and thus to epiphanize and express, man's inward life. And through the symbolizing of emotions and moods "subjectivity makes its presence good."

The same aim of giving philosophic credit where it is due is pursued in the third chapter on myth and intelligence. Instead of accepting science as the standard use of intelligence, MacCallum shows that there are other uses such as the political, the religious, and the artistic, each of which has its peculiar validity in its proper sphere. The matrix of all these ways in which man can be intelligent is myth, this being analysed as the employment of symbols in organizing our responses to the sacred and the profane. The sacred is described as "one supremely exciting and terrifying thing." For those people who refine myth intelligently into religion it is God; for others it may be sex, money, or violence. The profane, in contrast, is that in life which is approached as being "just ordinary." The role of mythical intelligence in ordering human reactions to the world in terms symbolizing these two basic categories is illustrated by historical examples, one of which—the Yin-Yang myth—is especially and absorbingly detailed. In this treatment of myth MacCallum stresses its general nature and the manner of its operation rather than a minutely considered warrant for its own mode of validity.

This book also performs the valuable role of preserving in more permanent and more widely accessible form a mimeographed commentary on T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*. With an unusually perceptive and sympathetic insight MacCallum traces the structure of these poems. He does so by examining together the mutually echoing movements of each poem, and from this concurrent point of view he interprets Eliot's conception of the redemption through eternity of the passing moments of time. From the very nature of Eliot's poetry, not to mention the nature of poetry in general, it is highly questionable whether any such exposition can be, or even should aim at being, regarded as definitive—as MacCallum himself well recognizes. But nevertheless one feels confident that this essay brings its readers a long way towards a closer approximation to Eliot's meaning. That MacCallum had an intimately responsive sense for what Eliot says may be realized not only from the contents of the essay itself. A pertinent extraneous fact is the date of mimeographing in 1949. In the issue of the *New York Times Book Review* for November 29, 1953, John Lehmann gives an account of a recent interview with Eliot. During this interview the poet himself describes how he came to write the four

quartets as a group. MacCallum comes very near indeed, if he does not hit the centre of the mark, in anticipating this statement. Clearly he is right in spirit, though perhaps not in some syllables of the historical letter. It is not often that an Eliot commentator is verified to this high degree.

One striking feature of MacCallum's essay on the quartets is the way it brings out the difference between Eliot's view of redeeming the values that have flown by in time and such an attitude towards the past as one finds in Proust. Eliot's Christian conception of time is interpreted as a drawing of the past into the present that makes the now, in which we really live, more worth while. Somebody like Proust falls a victim to "the familiar drugs of those with an absent present." Proust himself is under the toxic influence of a passion which recaptures and perpetuates the essences of past experiences. And his nostalgia for the past is felt at the expense of his actually living now. A speculative comment on behalf of Proust might here be added. Although there is an unfortunate sterility in his backward-looking perspective, there is also an appreciation of essential natures that could, with due modifications, be caught up and included in the Eliot-Christian view of regaining lost times.

Another more specific essay appraises the Canadian "Group of Seven" painters. MacCallum points out something about this movement that is often forgotten. This, to use his own terms, is the fact that the common mode of feeling of these men forged the traditional into a new expressiveness. With this in mind, the achievement of the group is summarily, but one would think, soundly placed in the broader setting of the aims of Western art and as a result we discover that its significance is enhanced.

The abstract statements in this review are all too likely to give the impression that *Imitation & Design and Other Essays* is a baldly academic book. Haste is made to guard against any such eventuality. MacCallum expresses the more general themes of his book in a manifold of concrete examples that attract and excite the reader. Although the volume is, as it should be, quite closely reasoned, it is clear, happily phrased, frequently witty, and sometimes epigrammatic. In stating philosophical claims the tone is one of positive but far from positivistic assertion, and with that is blended a self-critical but not minutely analytical caution and a dogma-evading modesty.

The editor of these papers, Professor William Blissett, should be mentioned with gratitude. He has performed a labour of love with great care and rewarding results.

A NEW INTERPRETATION OF *FAUST** — HEINRICH MEYER

Professor Fairley's previous studies of Goethe have initiated a new epoch in biographical and literary research because he brought to a seemingly fully explored field of investigation a freshness of outlook, an independence of judgment, a keen sense of logic, and, above all, literary taste and skill such as had not been seen since the days of Hermann Grimm. It is most refreshing that he now brings these same gifts to bear on *Faust*. He breaks with the tedious tradition of *Faust* commentators who either used to show their odd pieces of knowledge under the pretext of source study, or persisted in elaborating time-worn problems posed by generations of predecessors. When one reads Homer one is hardly aware that there should be an Homeric question; when one reads *Faust* and Goethe's remarks on *Faust*, one becomes certain that there is no room for a *Faust* problem. Professor Fairley has therefore discussed *Faust* as a literary masterpiece that is open to the sensitive mind and the appreciative heart, and that does not conceal an esoteric message, a deeper meaning, an implied system of philosophy or any other hidden content such as has been imputed to it ever since the eighteen-twenties when Hinrichs, the Hegelian, lectured on *Faust* to "a not inconsiderable number" in Heidelberg. While it seems impossible that Goethe's life-work should have been misinterpreted and reinterpreted generation after generation in the face of Goethe's own clear directions, we have seen until recent years one commentary after another misinterpreting the obvious and overlooking the manifest merely because men without a feeling for artistic value and poetic beauty would not be satisfied until they had lent their own jejune ideas about life and death, salvation and damnation to Goethe who, certainly, felt quite differently about those matters. Barker Fairley was wise enough not even to take issue by indirection with this burdensome, even deadly past. He has read *Faust* with a fresh mind and has given us his sound impressions with a convincing and most delightful clarity. Himself an artist in the use of words, he knows how to say well that which he has felt and seen.

Originally written for delivery under the Mary Flexner Lectureship at Bryn Mawr, the six lectures of the book address themselves to a mature audience. But in making his chief points, the experienced teacher also manages to let us understand them integrally, as an outflow of Goethe's creative genius, and thus gives, by way of *Faust* interpretation, a comprehensive interpretation of Goethe. This is as it

**Goethe's Faust: Six Essays.* By BARKER FAIRLEY. London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press. 1953. Pp. viii, 132. $2.00.

should be, for in Goethe we do not have an artist who follows an established genre or form, but one who shapes his form through the very act of self-expression. This is brought out in the first chapter on "Goethe's Dramatic Characters." The chapter discusses Goethe's lyrical poetry and dramatic self-representation and develops from his mode of work the plot and history of *Faust* itself. The interpretation of *Faust* that results is new in the *Faust* literature, but it is not new to those who have read *Faust* with love and who could not find in it a "problem." The second chapter, "The Form of *Faust*," applies the principles of monologue and dialogue, of lyric and dramatic expressions, of Faustian and Mephistophelian parts, to a comparison of the two parts of *Faust* in which each scene discussed becomes more understandable both in itself and in its relation to the whole work, which has also been treated as an epic. Professor Fairley rightly says that the poem "is at once dramatic, epic, and lyrical without being properly any one of the three, the claims of each being vetoed by the other two." This "conflict of opposites" is then developed with reference to the rhythmic elements and the two opposing worlds of German Gothic and Hellenic Classicism. One remarkable word remains for all future students to consider: Goethe's "death put a close to a poem that otherwise might not have ended, being, as we have argued, endlessly extensible."

Space permits only the citing of the remaining chapter headings, "The Gretchen Tragedy," "The Two *Walpurgisnachts*," "Recurring Themes," and "The Fifth Act." Each of these chapters is full of convincing argument and subtle interpretation. There are, for example, the parallel between *Werther* and *Faust* (pp. 50 ff.); the renewed denial of the coarse model theories with respect to Friederike Brion; the service the extended *Walpurgisnacht* scenes do to the whole work, with an emphasis on the dream mood of the classical witches' sabbath; the subconscious patterns and recurring combination of motifs that tie together a poem which was not rationally planned, but grew; the evolution of a traditionless poem into one fraught with the harvests of preceding millenia; and especially those, almost touching, analyses of the fifth act which seem to become themselves symbolic of the wider spheres to which Faust is elevated, not only by reference to other poets, but especially by Fairley's emphasis on that which matters most, a free mankind and an open door to our personal growth. "After so many masterpieces that end by closing the door it is valuable to have one that opens it and opens it wide, telling us that life, such as it is, is ours to make of it what we can."

A GREAT MODERN SOLDIER*

C. P. STACEY

Field-Marshal Erwin Rommel is one of the genuinely legendary figures of the Second World War. He was idolized by his men and by the German public. The British soldiers whom he fought, and frequently beat, in the North African desert had more admiration for him than for many of their own commanders; in the British House of Commons Winston Churchill saluted him, "across the havoc of war," as "a very daring and skilful opponent and . . . a great general"; and a British brigadier wrote a laudatory biography of him which had a tremendous sale and was made into a film which Britons—and Canadians—lined up for blocks to see. He was Hitler's favourite commander; and in 1944 Hitler forced him to commit suicide to avoid trial for treason. It is an extraordinary story; and it must be said that the legend is unlikely to be diminished by the recent publication of *The Rommel Papers*. Many who have been sceptical till now have been convinced by this book that Rommel was in fact exactly what Churchill called him in 1942. It is a remarkable volume, and an important contribution to the history of the Second World War.

Rommel intended to write a book about his campaigns; and whenever a quiet interlude gave him the chance he made a practice of putting on paper an account of the most recent operations and a commentary upon them. Though he didn't survive to write the book, these preliminary papers have fortunately been preserved, as have most of his letters to his family. Together they make up the greater part, and the most important part, of this volume. The gaps have been filled by chapters written by General Fritz Bayerlein, sometime Chief of Staff of the Afrika Korps, and by Rommel's son Manfred. But about four-fifths of the book is Rommel, and fascinating stuff it is. Rommel wrote pungently; the translation is lively; and the editor, Captain B. H. Liddell Hart, has done a skilful and helpful job, though more attention to scholarly minutiae would have made it more valuable to the student. The narrative is subject to checking on points of detail, but the book's general significance is beyond doubt.

From these pages Rommel emerges as a rather attractive personality and an extremely brilliant tactician—that is to say, battlefield commander. In this department, the war probably produced no abler general. The present writer must admit, however, that he finds little here to contradict Field-Marshal Montgomery's coldly laconic comment, "Rommel was no strategist." (In general, it is the commanders

**The Rommel Papers.* Edited by B. H. LIDDELL HART. With the assistance of LUCIE-MARIA ROMMEL, MANFRED ROMMEL and General FRITZ BAYERLEIN. Translated by PAUL FINDLAY. London and Toronto: Collins. 1953. Pp. xxx, 545. $5.00.

whom Rommel beat, rather than those who beat him, who have made the largest contributions to the Rommel legend.) But it is piquant to discover that a few weeks before his own death Rommel wrote, "Montgomery was undoubtedly more of a strategist than a tactician."

Rommel's description of the campaign in France in 1940, in which he commanded the 7th Panzer Division, is one of the most illuminating accounts of that bizarre and dramatic episode. The worst crisis the 7th Panzer had to surmount was apparently the British counter-attack at Arras on May 21. French resistance ran the gamut from desperate courage down to total apathy. After the break-through, the German tank columns sometimes motored for miles past French troops who merely looked at them. An interesting point is that Rommel insisted on the advance being made across country, avoiding villages and main roads. One reflects that, had he come to England, much of the effort devoted there in 1940 and 1941 to making towns and villages into what were known as "tank-proof localities" might have turned out to be wasted.

In February, 1941, Rommel was sent to Africa, where the Italians had taken a terrible beating from Lord Wavell, to try to recoup the Axis fortunes. It was there that he really made his name, and his narrative of the early desert operations, which in general is markedly objective, makes absorbing reading. The striking thing is that he contrived to do so much with so little. His forces were usually smaller than those the British brought against him, though as he admits he long had the advantage of having better tanks and anti-tank guns. The supplies that reached him across the Mediterranean were normally inadequate. Yet thanks mainly to his masterly handling of his armour he won great victories.

These successes were not the result of new tactical conceptions. There are no ideas in this book that are not to be found in the excellent British Field Service Regulations of the days before 1939. (There is a story that a German officer once observed that the British had the best training manuals in the world, and that it was fortunate they didn't read them.) Rommel simply applied the well-established principles to armoured warfare more effectively than his opponents. He knew the importance of speed, and of concentration at the decisive point; and he criticizes his British opponents for failing to take proper account of these things. His comment on the 201st Guards Brigade at Knightsbridge is typical: "This brigade was almost a living embodiment of the virtues and faults of the British soldier—tremendous courage and tenacity combined with a rigid lack of mobility." Faithful, they say, are the wounds of a friend. The censures of a skilful enemy are sometimes useful too.

In some respects Rommel was a thoroughly typical German, and not least in his politics. There were some German General Staff officers who opposed Hitler before 1939—not, in most cases, for moral reasons, but because they feared he was going to start a war which Germany could not win. There were other Germans who opposed Hitler from higher motives. Rommel was in neither category. (Incidentally, he never belonged to the General Staff Corps.) He was one of the uncounted millions who supported Hitler as long as he was winning. He wrote to his wife in June, 1940, "The Fuehrer's visit was wonderful. . . . His whole face was radiant and I had to accompany him afterwards. I was the only divisional commander who did." But disillusionment came in time. It came, in fact, suddenly, in the last stages of the Battle of El Alamein. At the moment when Rommel's battle sense told him that he must retreat in order to save what was left of his army from destruction, Hitler, far away in Europe, sent him a signal forbidding him to yield an inch of ground. He obeyed, with the result that when he had to give way two days later his army was a remnant, which never took the offensive effectively again. His confidence in Hitler probably never recovered. This book tells us little about Rommel's share in the plotting against the Fuehrer. If there were any documents the Field Marshal was too wise to preserve them. But readers of Wheeler-Bennett's *The Nemesis of Power* (a book which, though unnecessarily hostile to Rommel, serves as a corrective to the extreme pro-Rommel interpretation of this episode) know that he was certainly involved; though apparently he was not privy to the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944.

One could write about *The Rommel Papers*, and quote it, at indefinite length. But those who are interested in the mind of a great captain, in the military operations of the Second World War, or in the problem of modern Germany, should read it for themselves. They will find it rewarding.

THE STATE OF ELIOT CRITICISM* — WILLIAM BLISSETT

The past few years have brought a flowering—a less friendly critic might call it a rash—of studies of Mr. T. S. Eliot's work. That of Mr. D. E. S. Maxwell is one of several dealing with the poetry and with the plays and essays as they bear on the poetry, and it will afford an opportunity for a general appraisal.

Of the books to appear since F. O. Matthiessen's *Achievement of*

**The Poetry of T. S. Eliot.* By D. E. S. MAXWELL. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited [Toronto: British Book Service (Canada) Ltd.]. 1952. Pp. viii, 224. $4.25.

T. S. Eliot (New York, 1935; revised 1947), three are collections of essays by various writers. The one edited by March and Tambimuttu is a pleasant set of reminiscences and personal greetings to the poet on his sixtieth birthday and has no critical pretensions. The other two, edited by Rajan and by Unger, are anthologies of reviews and articles which are valuable for the record but are essentially backward looking.

If these collections were intended to be helpful to critics and scholars, it would seem that they have so far failed of their intention. Writers on Eliot for the most part pay not the slightest attention to one another. Miss Helen Gardner, for instance, acknowledges the help of Matthiessen, to be sure, and of Dr. Leavis but of hardly anyone else. Her *Art of T. S. Eliot* (London, 1949) is a literary book, full of good phrases and of valuable observations on versification and poetic form, but not attempting much explication of text or elucidation of idea. Its readers will be grateful for the suggestion that the *Four Quartets* are somehow an approximation to the Pindaric Ode; for the observation that *Murder in the Cathedral* shows "an almost Gnostic contempt for personality and its expression in acts"; and for the smile which she provokes at the expense of Mr. Eliot's "Platonic idea of an illiterate audience." Miss Gardner is the most graceful and tactful of writers; her book is a room

> Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid—

though I must hasten to say that she is not, like the Lady of the "Portrait," dreary.

If Miss Gardner is the most sensitive to literary quality, to poetic texture, Miss Elizabeth Drew, in her book *T. S. Eliot: The Design of his Poetry* (New York, 1949), is best on the mythopoetic aspect of Eliot's verse. "Our instincts of tidiness imperatively command us not to leave to the haphazard of the unconscious what we can attempt to do consciously." This statement from "The Function of Criticism" might seem to preclude her type of approach; but the book is sensibly written: the author relies on a tidy consciousness of her own and does not assert that all the poet's processes of sensibility are unconscious, merely that he has access to and can effectively use the primordial symbols of the language of myth. This approach makes possible an examination of the poems as a developing unity, a filling in of an archetypal pattern. I cannot find instances of the critic's having twisted the poems to fit this pattern, and this is high praise. Full of insight though the book is, the question nevertheless arises: if the Jungian system that Miss Drew expounds is as momentous as it has the air of being, why has not the Restitution of all things taken place?

And is she not a little too prone to call into consultation at all crucial points her Wise Baviaan, who, it must be admitted, though *quite* the wisest animal in all Switzerland, is not beautiful?[1]

At the opposite pole to these very special and personal studies is Professor George Williamson's *Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot* (New York, 1953), a poem-by-poem analysis arising out of years of teaching and intended primarily for the student. A helpful book, it contains much valuable information and good interpretation. A dangerous book, it abounds in passages of bald paraphrase whose only effect would be to give the reader the illusion of knowing the poems; this is especially the case in the second half of the book where the author seems tired, as well he might be after the excellent discussion of "The Waste Land." A disappointing book: in the discussion of poem after poem something useful to interpretation is left out. The "bloody wood" in "Sweeney among the Nightingales" is not explained; the reference to *Antony and Cleopatra* in "Burbank" is omitted, as is the passage from a letter of Ruskin about Rose La Touche in "A Cooking Egg"; the constellation of the Bear in passages of Seneca and Chapman is relevant to "Gerontion" but does not appear in the *Guide*. What use is an uncompendious compendium?

Mr. Maxwell's book is likewise far from complete as an explication of the poems, and his perfunctory little bibliography lists very little recent or American criticism. Surely this will be the last time that a critic tries to do everything himself. However, this is not a guide but a critical study of the poetry from a single standpoint, that of the poet's own idea of tradition. This idea is stated in an admirable paragraph:

> The chaos in poetry is to be resolved by the establishment of a community among artists. This will come from their common submission to the authority of poetic tradition, the expression of the mind of Europe. It reveals the history of metrical innovation: and in this is involved much else of significance to poetry. From the interaction between the poet's personality and the mind of Europe will result a poetic personality that, while retaining a certain individuality, a peculiar interpretation of the values of the collective mind, will be able to speak sanely and authoritatively because its individuality is not based solely on the poet's ego. In this way the poet becomes a medium capable of relating 'the accumulated wisdom of time' to the problems of this unsettled age, and will be better able, because of this, to see the pattern into which the chaos may be resolved. We can
>
> take heart for the future
> Remembering the past. (pages 22–3)

[1]There is a portrait in *Just So Stories*.

Later in the book, what is essentially the same idea is stated in these terms (p. 117): "From the beginning Eliot has been essentially a moralist. In the majority of the remaining poems [after "The Hollow Men"] he is, equally a moralist, now unequivocally a Christian moralist." This assertion is justified by ample and specific reference to Eliot's criticism from the beginning to the present; and Mr. Maxwell is in sympathy with it as Miss Gardner, Miss Drew, and Mr. Williamson clearly are not to anything like the same degree.

There is, however, a great difference between a morally critical poem and a moralizing paraphrase in soft polysyllables in which such statements as these are the rule: "The 'weeping multitudes' in "A Cooking Egg" weep over a vaguely discerned sense of loss of values," or "Those of Eliot's poems so far considered are concerned, briefly, with the depicting of a civilization content with grossly debased moral standards." It would be hard to deduce from these that Eliot wrote poems rather than editorials viewing with alarm.

In the two passages quoted, the moral doctrine, though slack in statement, was correct enough. But what can be made of a passage like this?

> In the urgency of belief that man must strive continually to overcome the endowment of Original Sin, Eliot and the Calvinists are united. . . . Because of the Puritan influence he tends to dwell not on the peace that can come from synthesis between 'free-will of the natural effort and ability of the individual and . . . supernatural grace', but on the failings of human beings—their 'dishonesty and self-deception, the insincerity of their emotions, their cowardice, the pettiness of their real ambition.' This is the strong Puritan influence in the poetry, and the Catholic is embodied in the emotional faith that religion has a property rising above schemes of morality, in response to the primary teachings of the Catholic Church—the saving grace of Mary, the purgatorial fire, the transubstantiation in the Eucharist. (p. 163)

The implications of this and similar passages would be the erroneous notions that Calvinism is a scheme of morality, Catholicism an emotional faith, that original sin is a doctrine held by Calvinists and Jansenists and that the conscience is a Puritan phenomenon. Not a word about the order and discipline of Catholicism and its attraction for the poet.

The interpretations of specific poems are likewise marred occasionally by mistakes. On page 167: "Even the natural scene at the end of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is seen as a social environment, the centre of a fashionable holiday:

> I shall wear white flannel trousers and walk upon the beach."

But that is *not* the end: the movement is "seaward," out of Prufrock's

depth. Again, "They were together and he fell" is not likely to suggest the "blues" if recognized as a parody of Tennyson's "They were together and she fell." "It is difficult not to think that the close relationship between brothel, convent, and the death of Agamemnon implies that the convent also represents some distortion of values," Mr. Maxwell writes (p. 86), with a footnote to the Puritan traditions of the poet's New England background. Now, Mr. Eliot was not reared in extreme Calvinism but in Unitarianism, a sect priding itself on its broad-mindedness, but even if he had shared the Calvinist disapproval of the monastic life, the remark on "Sweeney among the Nightingales" would still be beside the point, for the main parallel surely is the death wound—Agamemnon's, the piercing of the Sacred Heart, and the impending destruction of Sweeney.

To counterbalance these weak points in the exposition there are some illuminating discussions of aspects of Eliot's work. The interpretation of the Coriolanus figure is the best that I have read, and there is a fine passage, unfortunately relegated to a footnote, on "Marina" in relation to Seneca and Baudelaire.

This is a pedestrian study, but it gets there.

What are the prospects for further scholarship and criticism? First I must express the hope that the recent appearance of Mr. Gallup's *T. S. Eliot: A Bibliography* (London, 1953) as well as the general interest in the poet will lead to the publication of a second volume of *Selected Essays*, to include some of the important studies and reviews scattered through a score of periodicals as well as the major uncollected essays of the past twenty years. That, of course, depends on the poet and his publishing house.

Criticism, I believe, will be, and should be, directed toward the exploration of particular aspects of the work in a sensitive and thoroughgoing manner. Professor Edward J. H. Greene's *T. S. Eliot et la France* (Paris, 1951) has shown the way; any of the four general works considered here would have been the better if its author could have read this study, which presents *all* the relevant data on its subject and interprets it with tact. Professor S. Musgrove in *T. S. Eliot and Walt Whitman* (Wellington, 1952) has also brought new material to our attention which it will in future not be possible to ignore.

Many readers of Eliot have copies of the poems black with annotation, and the slow accretion of evidence and the quick pounces of discovery have provided over the years a pleasure as great as any stamp collector's. However, there is no escaping the fact that the poet now has a larger public made up of less dedicated readers. For them (and for anyone who would like to return to virgin pages) it seems

desirable that there should be compiled a T. S. Eliot Handbook which would identify and translate the epigraphs and other allusions, explaining their context when necessary, would point out the echoes and foreshadowings within Eliot's work, would comment on the versification, and perhaps might indicate what the main points of contention have been in critical interpretation—and then would stop. The production of such a book would be a real test of "impersonality."

A STUDY OF ARISTOTLE* L. E. M. LYNCH

In the present volume Mr. D. J. Allan, Reader in Ancient Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh, has succeeded very admirably in giving a careful and at the same time concise summary of Aristotle's thought. His approach, as he himself states (p. 1), is not to explore the history of the ideas that have originated with Aristotle with a view to evaluating their general importance. His intention is rather to outline the Stagirite's thought and relate it to the circumstances in which it arose. And yet while performing that task most satisfactorily, he has also taken occasion from time to time to refer to later Greek and Latin commentators on Aristotle in order to explain points pertinent to the task in hand. The result is that the author provides many helpful insights into the course of Aristotle's thought after his death even while engaged in exposition.

The exposition is introduced by a brief study of Aristotle's life and the development of his writings. These pages enable Mr. Allan to situate himself and his interpretation of Aristotle in the midst of such modern expositors as Robin, Taylor, and Jaeger. Jaeger's view is succinctly presented (pp. 12–14); and then the author's own attitude, in the light of Jaeger's researches, is bluntly stated without further comment. "To the present writer it seems doubtful whether the assumption of a steady, lifelong evolution of Aristotle's philosophy is justified, or is psychologically sound. The data would be equally well or better explained if we suppose that the death of Plato brought to a crisis a dissatisfaction which had long been latent within him; that he sought to clear his mind by writing, and after a few years of hard work, succeeded in formulating his own general principles; and that his philosophy thenceforward remained fixed in the form which it assumed at this crucial time" (p. 14). That view is maintained

*_The Philosophy of Aristotle_. By D. J. ALLAN. Home University Library of Modern Knowledge, 222. London, New York and Toronto: Oxford University Press. 1952. Pp. vi, 220. $1.50.

throughout. Unfortunately for us at the present time, Fr. Zurcher's work on Aristotle appeared contemporaneously with Mr. Allan's, so that we must wait to see his reaction to the thesis that the bulk of the works attributed to Aristotle are really not his but are the product of Theophrastus.

The main part of the book falls into four parts: Aristotle's general physical theory, his first philosophy and theology, his logic and theory of knowledge, and his moral doctrine. Mr. Allan traces the various meanings of "nature," the distinction between change and movement, matter and form as constituents of physical entities, the role of the four causes in the physical universe and the teleology at work therein. This general theory is then applied to the various orders of nature, beginning with the heavens, continuing through man and the manner of presence intellect has in his soul, and concludes with the lower animals. The argument of the work *On the Soul* is presented and expounded in some detail, with many useful references to the later Greek, Latin, and Arabic commentators.

Mr. Allan's study of Aristotle's first philosophy presents in very brief form the many long controversies and misunderstandings that have surrounded the doctrine of *ousia*, and he defends Aristotle's treatment of substance against the charge that the Stagirite has only bred confusion with his doctrine. In outlining the theology of Aristotle, our author is mainly concerned with the treatise *On Philosophy* and with certain passages from the *Metaphysics* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*, his purpose being to relate God, Prime Mover, and the Good. In these passages, Mr. Allan prefers the view that God is one in Aristotle, and the term "God" usually appears in the singular in his exposition.

The treatment of logic insists on the intimate connection between the notion of inference developed in Aristotle, and the role the syllogism plays in demonstrative science. Here Mr. Allan takes occasion to defend Aristotle against the charge that he has not formulated the ground of inference, but has merely classified the kinds of inference. There are in this discussion many valuable comments on the efforts of some modern logicians to find a close bond between their own logics and that of Aristotle.

Finally, the summary of Aristotle's ideas on moral subjects centres mainly on the relation between politics and ethics, the happiness of the *polis* and that of the individual. Here are to be found some of Mr. Allan's best pages, particularly in expounding the role of the mean in Aristotle's conception of virtue, and in relating true judgment and right desire in the practical judgment. The two or three pages on

choice and will are particularly enlightening. The work concludes with a brief evaluation of Aristotle's contributions to the history of thought, a short bibliography, and a useful index.

This work evinces at every turn a very great sympathy for Aristotle. Indeed, Mr. Allan allows few opportunities to escape him to defend Aristotle against charges brought against him in later ages. It is in this context that our author's chosen approach proves most useful. Throughout the book the reader has the comforting feeling that the text of Aristotle is not far from the author's mind as he writes. The last part of the book is admittedly sketchy, as though too few pages had been allotted the author. Certainly, as he says, no adequate notion of Aristotle's ideas on politics and rhetoric could be gained from the summary treatment they receive. The earlier parts of the work, however, more than compensate for the brevity of the last quarter.

SHORTER NOTICES

The Old Testament: Keystone of Human Culture. By WILLIAM A. IRWIN. New York: Henry Schuman [Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons (Canada) Ltd.]. 1952. Pp. xiv, 293. $5.00.

This is an expansion of the chapters which Professor Irwin contributed to *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man* (Chicago, 1946). It represents the fruit of a lifetime devoted to biblical study and, in the reviewer's opinion, is one of the finest expositions of the Old Testament which has ever been written. Canadians may take pride in the fact that the author is a Canadian, and a former member of the Department of Oriental Languages, University of Toronto.

Irwin vigorously combats the widespread notion that the Hebrews, unlike the Greeks, were a primitive people. Actually they were the heirs of an older cultural tradition, and while they have not left us a record of the mental processes by which they arrived at their conclusions, as did the Greeks, their conclusions are none the less trustworthy and profound. In fact, Irwin contends that Israel, not Greece, marks the Great Divide of human history. Her literature forms the bridge between the ancient and modern thought-worlds. It takes the best conceptions which the past had produced, brings them to a focus, and transmutes them under the influence of monotheism, thereby laying the basis for a new era of development. It may well be doubted, however, whether this justifies the assertion that the Old Testament is the "keystone of human culture," or even of "Western" culture, although it was admittedly a vital ingredient in the latter.

By many people the Old Testament is regarded as a homogeneous work, varied in content but reflecting very much the same religious attitude throughout. One of the great merits of Professor Irwin's book is that it shows us that such is far from being the case. A surprising number of points of view are represented, ranging all the way from atheism and agnosticism to ultra-conservatism, and showing that Israel was the centre of a vigorous intellectual life, especially in matters pertaining to religion and morals. To the presence of a questioning, even sceptical, attitude Irwin attributes much of Israel's achievements in these fields.

While the whole gamut of Old Testament thought is brought under review, the author devotes his attention primarily to the answers which Hebrew thinkers gave to those questions relating to the nature of God, man, and the world "which persist age after age and are new with each generation." Perhaps a truer picture of Old Testament thought would have been presented if more attention had been paid to the purely nationalistic, bloodthirsty, and immoral passages. But would any useful purpose have been served thereby? It is only necessary to draw attention to such passages when exaggerated claims are made for the Old Testament.

There is only one point where the reviewer would venture to differ with his former teacher. He doubts whether the idea of universal history appeared among the Hebrews "ages before" (p. 163) it appeared in the West. He believes it made its first appearance in Israel not more than a century before the time of Herodotus.

F. V. WINNETT

New Ways of Ontology. By NICOLAI HARTMANN. Translated by REINHARD C. KUHN. Chicago: Henry Regnery Company [Toronto: S. J. Reginald Saunders and Company Limited]. 1953. Pp. vi, 146. $5.50.

The present volume is the authorized English translation of the late Professor Hartmann's *Neue Wege der Ontologie*. It presents, according to the dust-jacket, "a metaphysics conceived in the spirit of modern science and the contemporary world." The great vice of Metaphysics, for Hartmann, is her propensity to indulge in speculation; and he wishes to make a respectable woman of her by marrying her off to that eminently solid citizen, Science, in the hope that such an alliance will permanently cure her of her roving eye and wandering mind.

In spite of his promise to provide, by sober scientific analysis, a knowledge of "being as such," what Hartmann actually does is to describe four main kinds or "strata" of being: the inorganic, the organic, the psychical, and the spiritual. It is the task of the "new ontology" first to formulate the "ontological categories" of each stratum, secondly to determine the laws of interrelatedness of the strata. Various "ontological laws" are then worked out, and illustrations given of philosophies which violate one or more of them. While many of Hartmann's incidental distinctions are valuable, the net result of all this analysis is not very illuminating. We are solemnly warned of the dangers of using the categories of one stratum to explain the nature of another, and of the errors of traditional materialism, idealism, etc., in this regard; we learn that such theories oversimplify reality, that sooner or later they "collide with the phenomena," and "simply collapse" (p. 56), etc.

Unfortunately, Hartmann seems neither to recognize some of his own suggestions (notably his "explanation" of evolution) for what they are, viz., speculations; nor to realize the debatable nature of his own metaphors, particularly the whole notion of "levels," with such associated figures as "support," "superimposition," etc. Moreover, his attempt to cure metaphysics of the vice of speculation seems to rest on the notion that metaphysics is (or ought to be?) merely a more general discipline than science, but with similar aims, and so subject to the same criteria. Such a view seems quite mistaken. No doubt metaphysics must in some sense, like science, "account for the appearances," but hardly in the same sense. No self-respecting idealist, for instance, would be shaken, as Hartmann thinks he should be, when confronted with certain well-known data from empirical science concerning the late appearance of mind and spirit in the evolutionary process. The idealist hardly rests his case for the Absolute on any "phenomena" coming within the ken of *science*. To erect scientific discoveries into "ontological laws" is, from his viewpoint, to beg many questions; for it is just his contention that science deals *only* with "phenomena," in *another* sense of that word. Just in so far as such views are speculative—that is, go *beyond* phenomena—they escape the risk of collision *with* phenomena. To many contemporary minds, no doubt, speculation is the cardinal sin. But it is surely the very life of metaphysics; a "metaphysics without speculation" is like a science without verification, or a religion without mystery. And even if it could be "proven" that speculation is a sin, the present work is evidence that, like other sins, it is easier to condemn than to avoid.

W. M. SIBLEY

The Harvard Book: Selections from Three Centuries. Edited by WILLIAM BENTINCK-SMITH. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press [Toronto: S. J. Reginald Saunders and Company Limited]. 1953. Pp. xx, 369. $6.50.

Harvard has her own character, as any one who has walked across the Yard will know; but she presents many faces, beginning with the prim elegance of Massachusetts Hall and ending—for the present—with the unblinking assurance of Gropius' new buildings. In this agreeable book the editor of the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* has gathered together from many sources a miscellany of some seventy-eight pieces concerning Harvard written by her own sons and a select company of visitors. There are noble words from President Eliot (about Harvard's aristocracy), shameful words from Mistress Eaton (about the bad fish served in the College), and bizarre words from Professor Sophocles (about himself, his pupils, and his friends). The savour of Harvard life is enjoyed warmly by Dean Briggs and coolly by Santayana. Cleveland Amory contributes a fascinating account of the murder of Dr. Parkman by Professor Webster, ending with the story of the refusal by Bliss Perry's mother, thirty years later, to put up as a guest James Russell Lowell, who was a distinguished man of letters but also a professor at Harvard. "I could not sleep," she said, "if one of those Harvard professors were in the house." The University's scholarship does not escape either, for we read of the Dutch pastors who, after an unlucky visit to the College in 1680, reported that the students "knew hardly a word of Latin"; but in 1833 things were better: at any rate, when President Quincy showed to Dr. Beck the Latin address which he had prepared for the visit of Andrew Jackson, Beck, after making two corrections, pronounced it "as good Latin as a man need write." The visitors too make their contributions, for example in Lady Emmeline Stuart-Wortley's delicious account of her visit to Agassiz in 1849 or Alistair Cooke's wry narrative of the Harvard–Yale cricket match of 1951. All in all, this book provides much that is diverting and instructive, and it falls only infrequently into (what must be the peril of such books) the vapidities of undergraduates, the sentimentalities of alumni, or the avuncular jocularities of professors. It will not remind the Harvard man, or inform any one else, of all that the University is; but it will serve for the delectation of the one and—perhaps—the edification of the other.

LEONARD WOODBURY

Existentialism and the Modern Predicament. By F. H. HEINEMANN. London: Adam & Charles Black [Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited]. 1953. Pp. viii, 212. $3.50.

Existentialism is one of the few possible alternatives, in professional philosophical circles, to the prevailing school of linguistic analysis. The latter type of philosophy refuses even to consider the great questions of the human spirit; it not only rejects all possible answers as nonsense, but dismisses the questions themselves as "bogus" and "spurious."

Refusing to be intimidated by such pejorative epithets, some of the most original minds of our time have directly tackled the first and most fundamental question of all, the question as to the nature of human existence. Since this, rather than the traditional question as to the nature of being, is their starting-point, these philosophers have been given the name of "existentialists."

Because they insist that it is man's status as a subject that distinguishes him from the rest of nature which consists of objects, the existentialists protest vigorously against the purely "objective" thinking of science and previous metaphysics. For this reason, they have usually done less than justice to these disciplines. On the other hand, their awareness of a dimension of reality other than that of objects enables them to probe deeper into the mysteries of life than other contemporary philosophies.

One of the primary facts about man that these philosophers discover is that he is at odds with himself, a condition described as self-alienation. Sometimes this condition is ascribed to the collectivising trend of our age, which is bound up with the advance of the machine and technology and which leads to the objectification or, what is the same thing, the depersonalization, of man. Another version of existentialism, while recognizing the stultifying effects of a highly technological society, sees that man's alienation from himself is simply the consequences of his prior estrangement from God. All the members of this group attempt to provide the antidote to self-alienation and to find the way to inner reconciliation and reintegration.

In the book under review, F. H. Heinemann, who has been familiar with and sympathetic towards the movement for twenty-five years and in close contact with its leaders, describes the searchings and probings of its best-known representatives: Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, Marcel, and Berdyaev. Three of these are definitely Christian philosophers and a fourth leaves the way open for religious belief. Heinemann thinks that the dialectic of existentialism leads from re-

ligion (Kierkegaard) through agnosticism (Heidegger) and atheism (Sartre) back to religion (Berdyaev, Marcel, Jaspers). Man, as a subject, can only be reconciled with himself if he is first reconciled with him whose name is I AM.

The seven essays on individual philosophers, which form the bulk of this work, are unified by the continuity of an easy and graceful style and by introductory and concluding chapters which are full of original and stimulating comments. On the whole, this book appears to be a reliable guide to a complicated and difficult subject.

D. R. G. OWEN

Henry James: The Untried Years, 1843–1870. By LEON EDEL. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company [Toronto: Longmans, Green & Co.]. 1953. Pp. 350. $6.00.

Although the last fifteen years or so have seen a greatly heightened interest in the writings and personality of Henry James, no adequate, full-length biography has existed. Now Leon Edel has begun to fill that need with this biography of the first twenty-seven years of James's life; two more volumes, covering the forty-six mature years, are to follow. Readers of James have expected much from Mr. Edel's biography, for few, if any, have a more extensive knowledge of Henry James. They have not been disappointed.

Earlier writers on James were ridden by the desire to demonstrate theses about American culture, about Puritanism, about James's personality, or about aesthetic form. Mr. Edel's end has been to discover James as he actually was, to speculate about why he was as he was, and to illuminate the life from the writing. His ruling ideas about James's personality seem to have been arrived at inductively and with discrimination. His major conclusion about the young James is that he was inhibited by a complex of family and social forces from direct expression of his strong individuality, and consequently realized his individuality in his "prodigiously creative art." Direct action for James was rendered impossible primarily by the nature of the tight but chaotic James family. The father seemed to the family a dear but ineffectual intellectual; the mother was paradoxically soft and strong. This ambiguous relation between male and female was intensified in its effects on James by the father's ever-shifting educational theories, from which the children profited and suffered. Moreover the family had an ever-shifting dwelling place—among others, Albany, New York, Geneva, London, Paris, Boulougne, Newport, and Cambridge.

These forces, added to the natural strife in a lively family of four sons and one daughter, gave Henry "a terrible need for order, for design, for apprehending." Another primary force was the unconscious, life-long struggle for supremacy with his elder brother, William. Another was his relation with his cousin Minny Temple, who died tragically in 1870. And another was "the complex fate" that James found it to be to be an American with a passion for art. The famous "obscure hurt" which James sustained in his late teens and which some recent writers have glamourized as a castration, Mr. Edel concludes to have been "a back injury, possibly a slipped disk, a sacroiliac or muscular strain, exacerbated by the tensions of the Civil War" and his own father's youthful leg amputation. James was shaped by these forces, but gradually harnessed them so that they worked toward his own quietly determined ends.

This biography shows that in his writing many more of James's themes, characters, and scenes were distillations from his own experience than a number of critics have believed. It also shows that that experience was wider, and the personality tougher and more comprehensive than many have thought. The best of James is not all to be found in the work of the Old Mandarin period, nor in the novels alone.

GORDON ROPER

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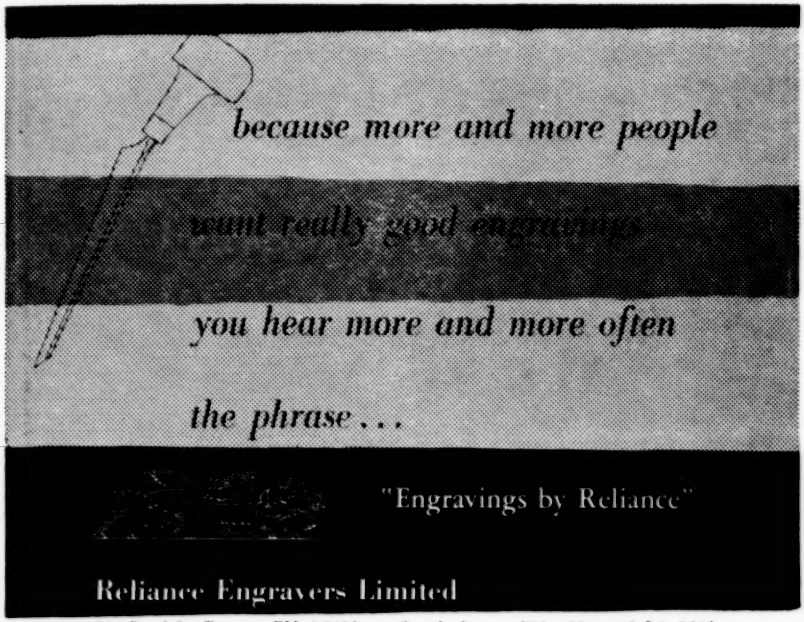
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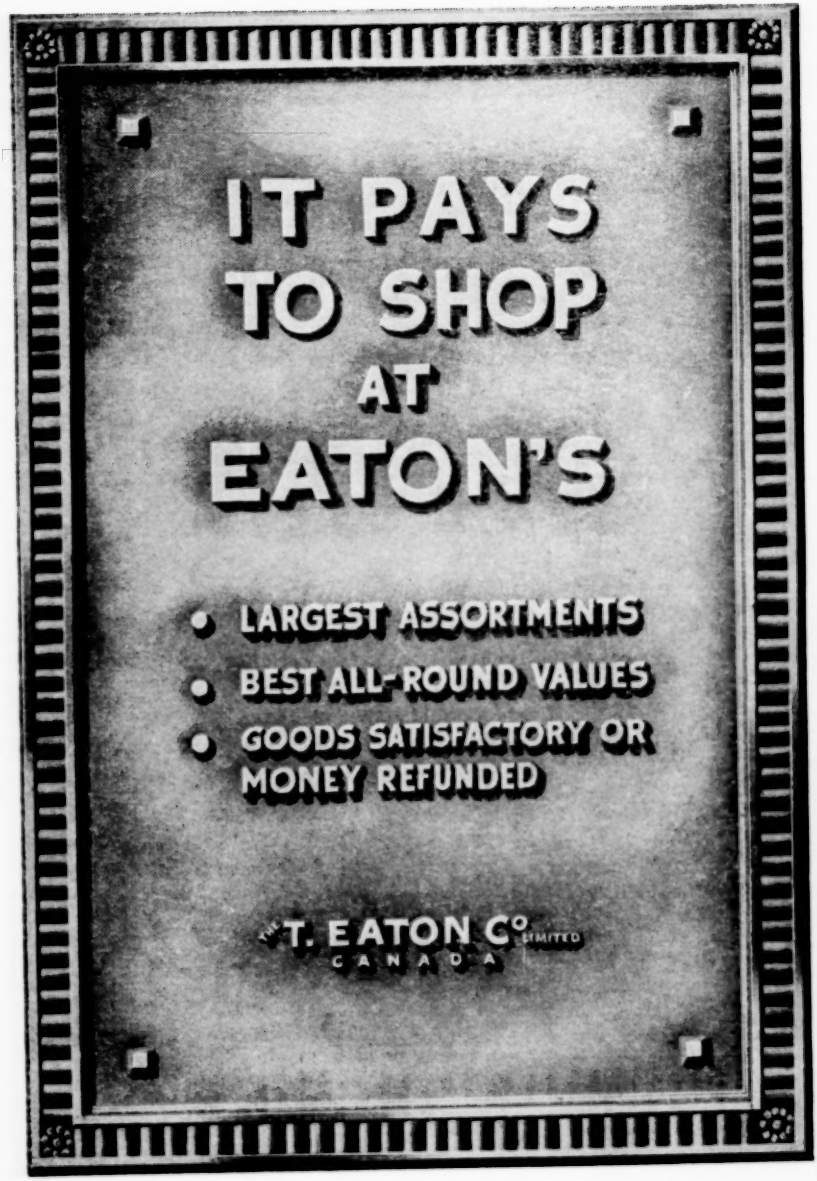
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